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WINGS OF VICTORY

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WINGS OF VICTORY

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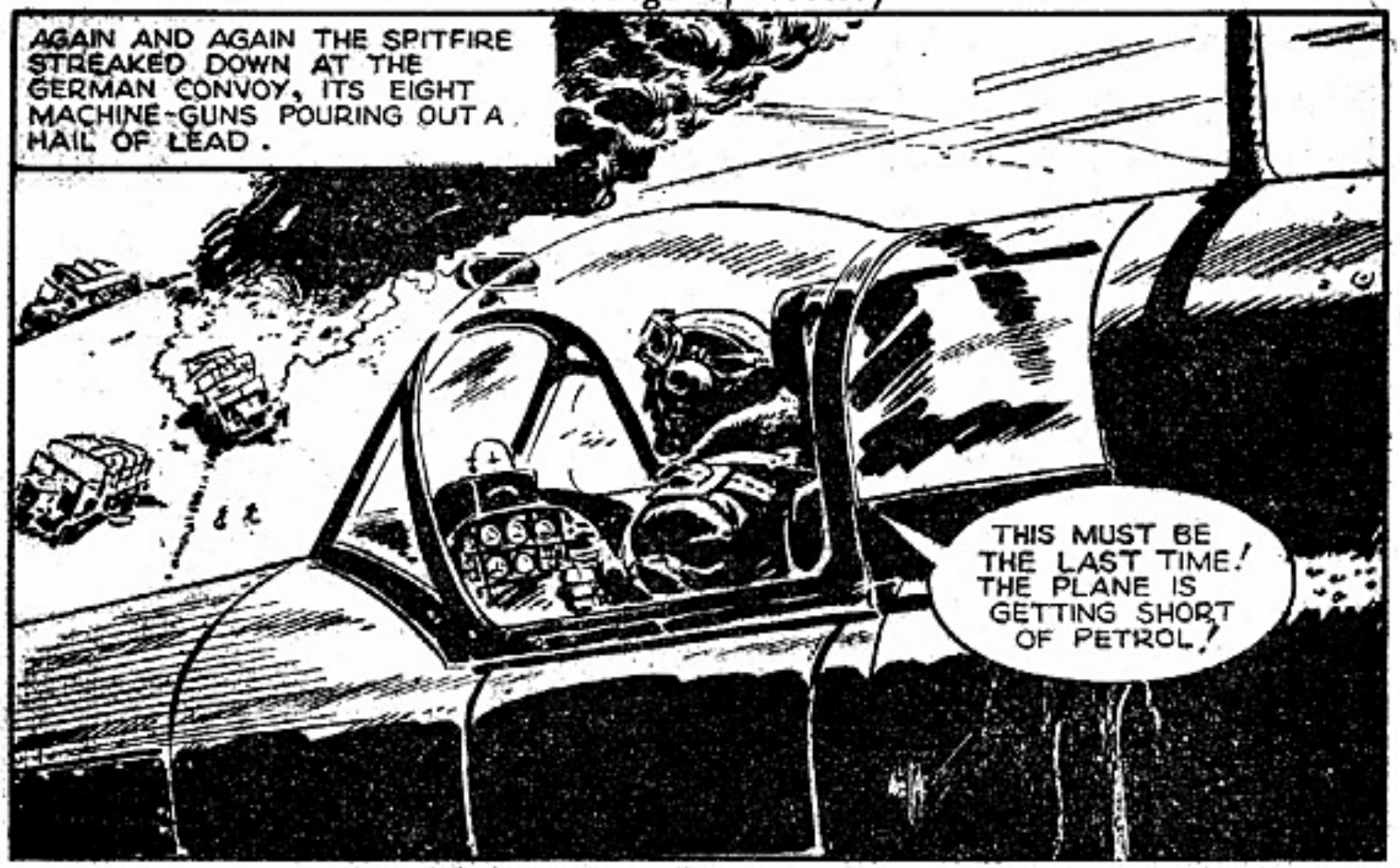
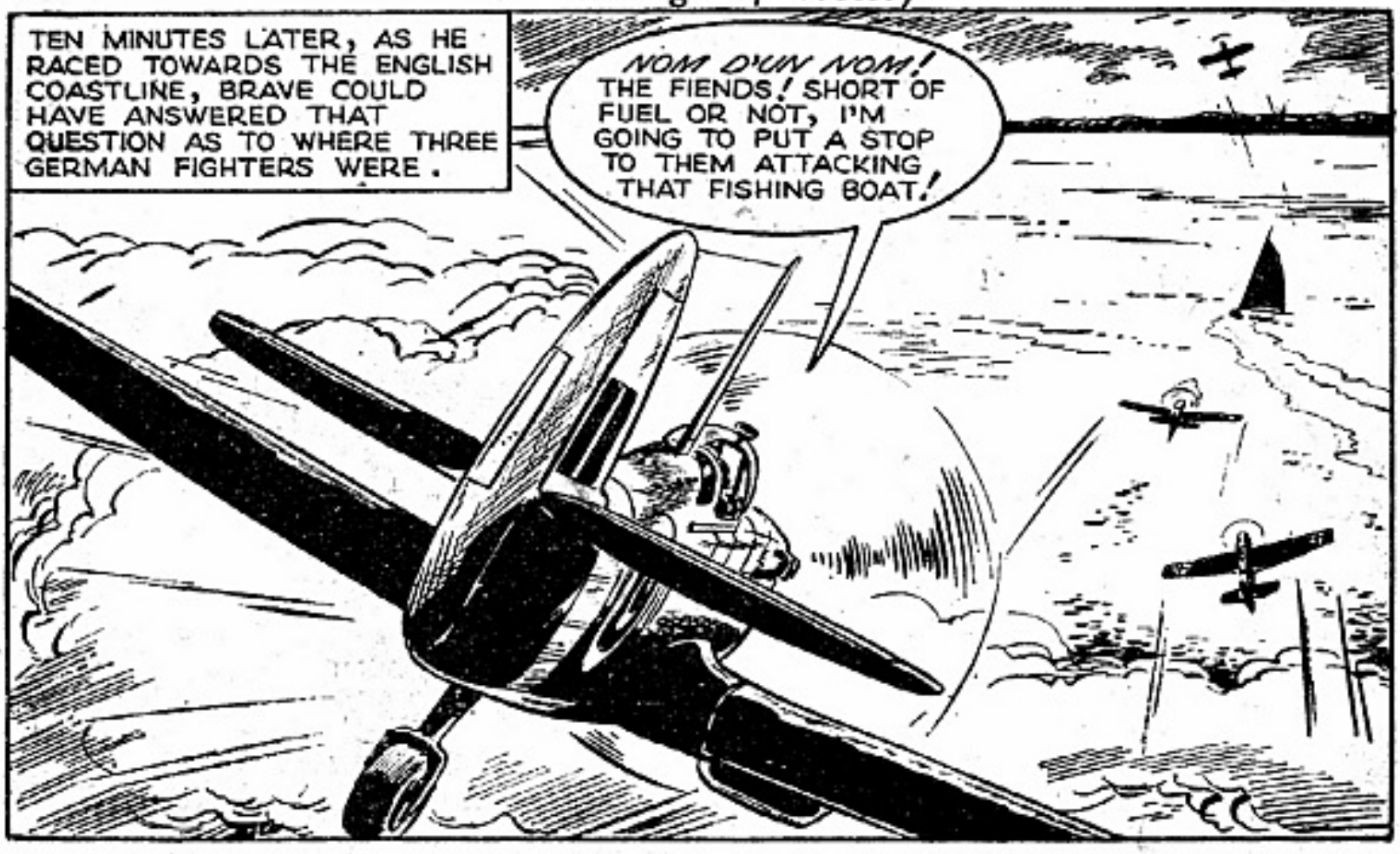
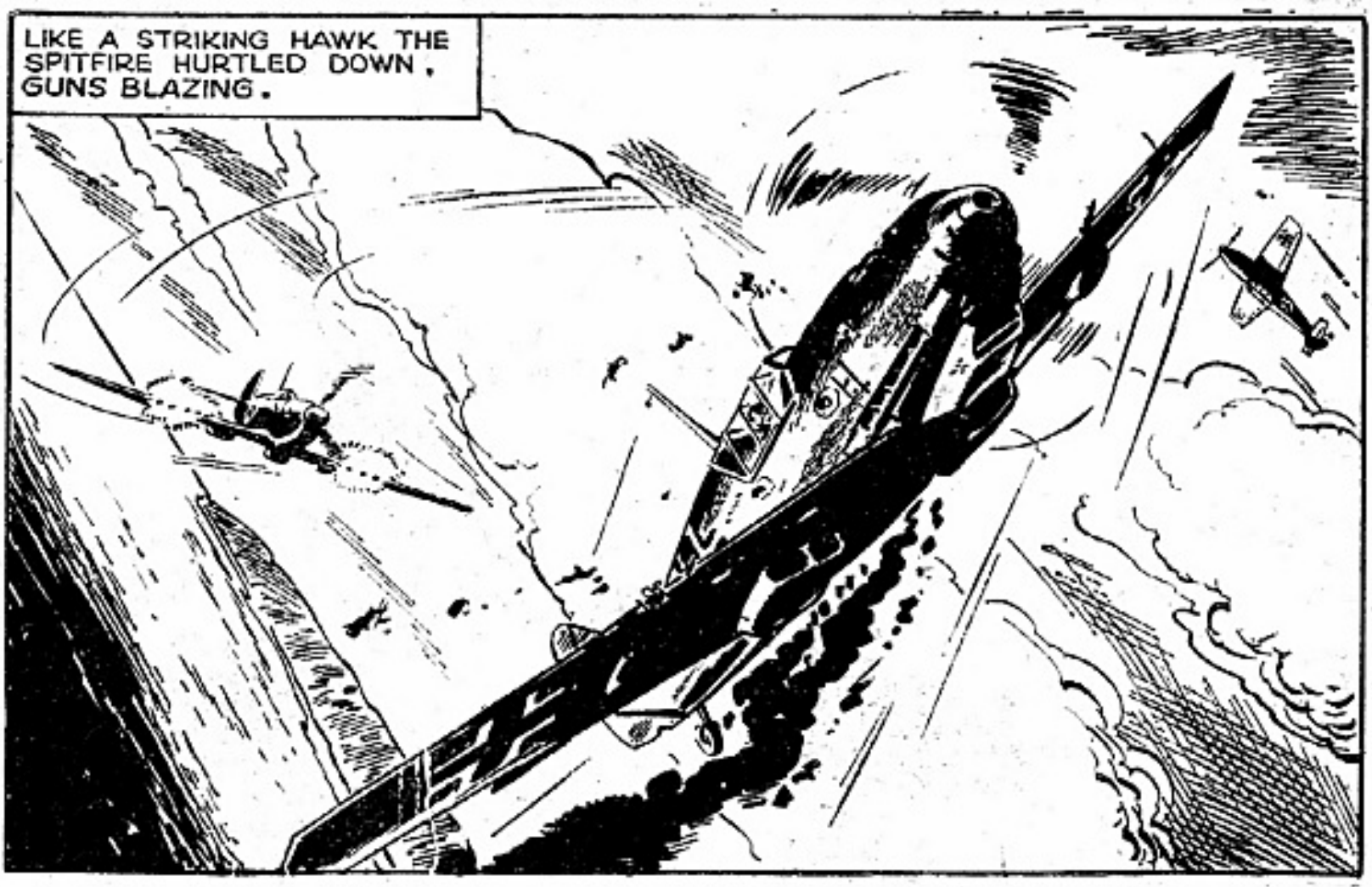
PAUL BRAVE AND THE *Flag of Glory*

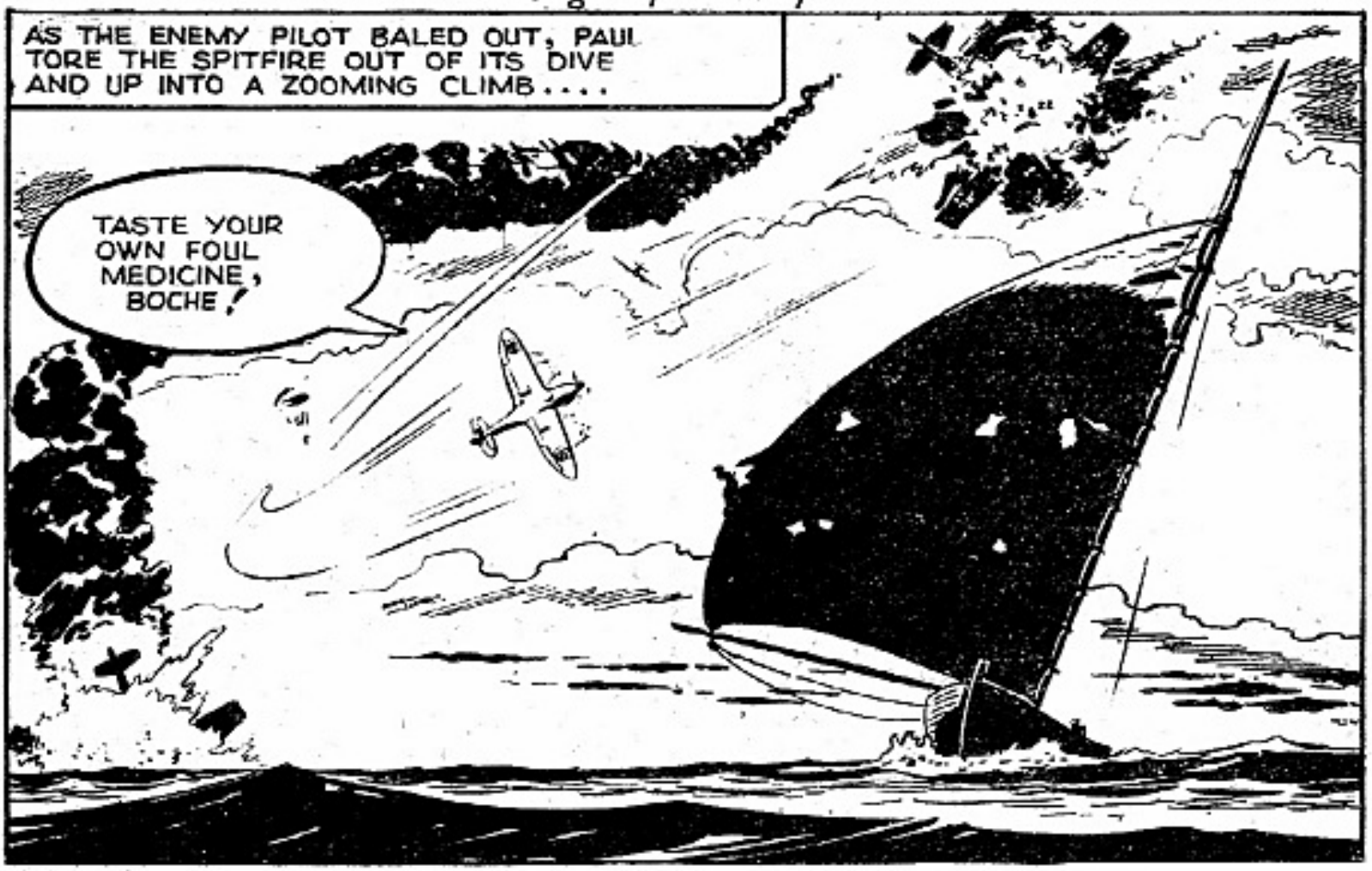
1940 ... France had fallen to the German might and across the English Channel, the battered British Army strove to recover from the dreadful but gallant withdrawal from Dunkirk. There was only one way England could strike back at Europe's conquerors ... FROM THE AIR! Many brave Frenchmen had managed to escape and flew for England against the hated Nazis. Among them was a daring pilot, Paul Brave, who, one morning, flew his Spitfire above a road leading into Dunkirk and sprayed lead into a column of German tanks and trucks.

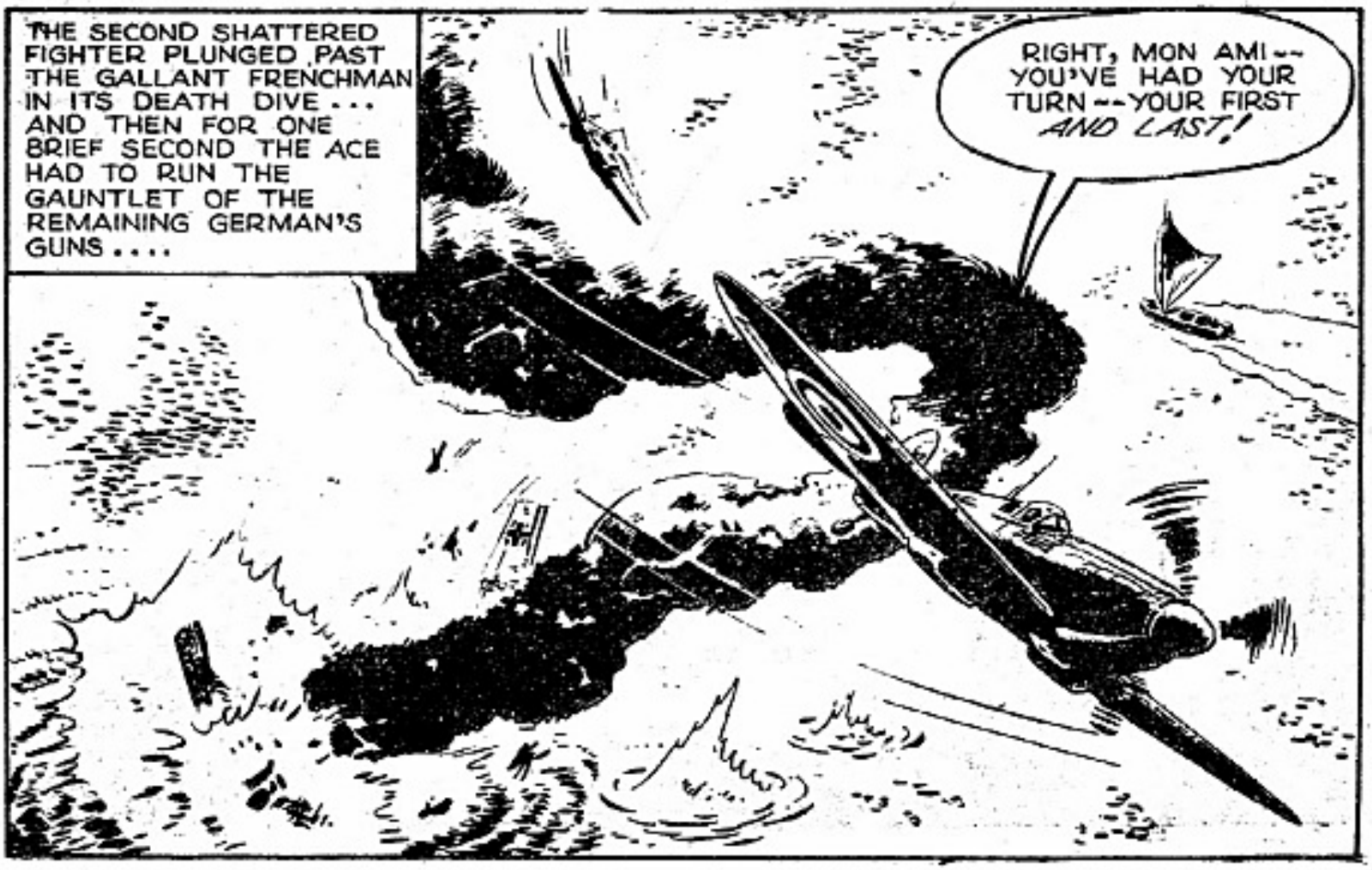

AGAIN AND AGAIN THE SPITFIRE STREAKED DOWN AT THE GERMAN CONVOY, ITS EIGHT MACHINE-GUNS POURING OUT A HAIL OF LEAD.
THIS MUST BE THE LAST TIME! THE PLANE IS GETTING SHORT OF PETROL!

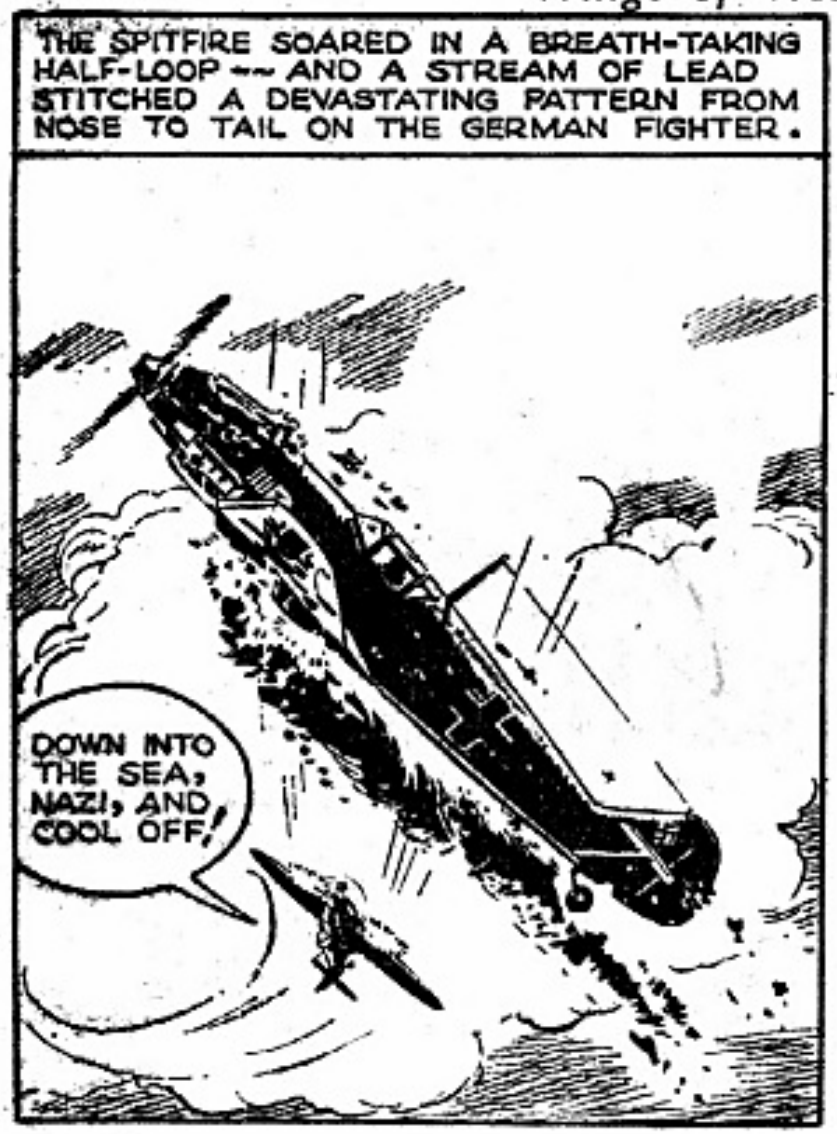
SQUADRON LEADER PAUL BRAVE, ALREADY AN ACE PILOT IN THE R.A.F., SPUN THE PLANE INTO A CLIMBING TURN TOWARDS THE FRENCH COAST.
PIG-DOG! HIMMEL! WHAT IS THE GLORIOUS LUFTWAFFE DOING TO LET ONE SPITFIRE ATTACK US SO IMPUDENTLY?

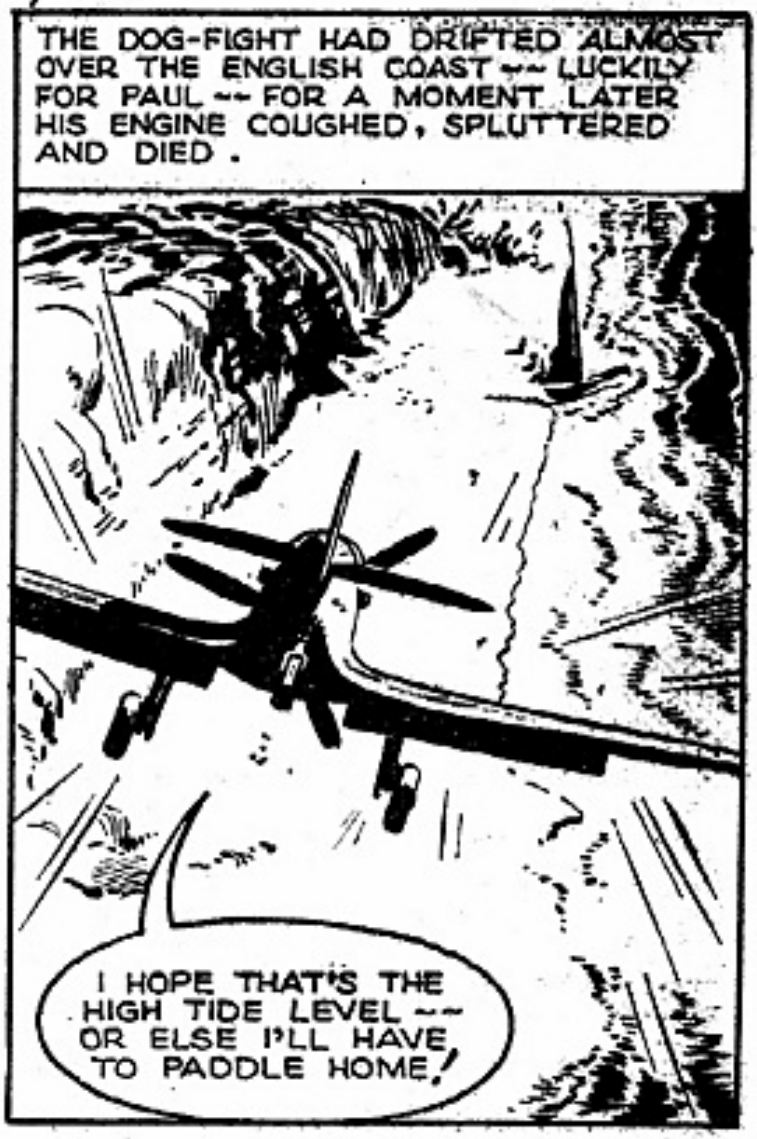

TEN MINUTES LATER, AS HE RACED TOWARDS THE ENGLISH COASTLINE, BRAVE COULD HAVE ANSWERED THAT QUESTION AS TO WHERE THREE GERMAN FIGHTERS WERE.
NOM D'UN NOM! THE FIENDS! SHORT OF FUEL OR NOT, I'M GOING TO PUT A STOP TO THEM ATTACKING THAT FISHING BOAT!

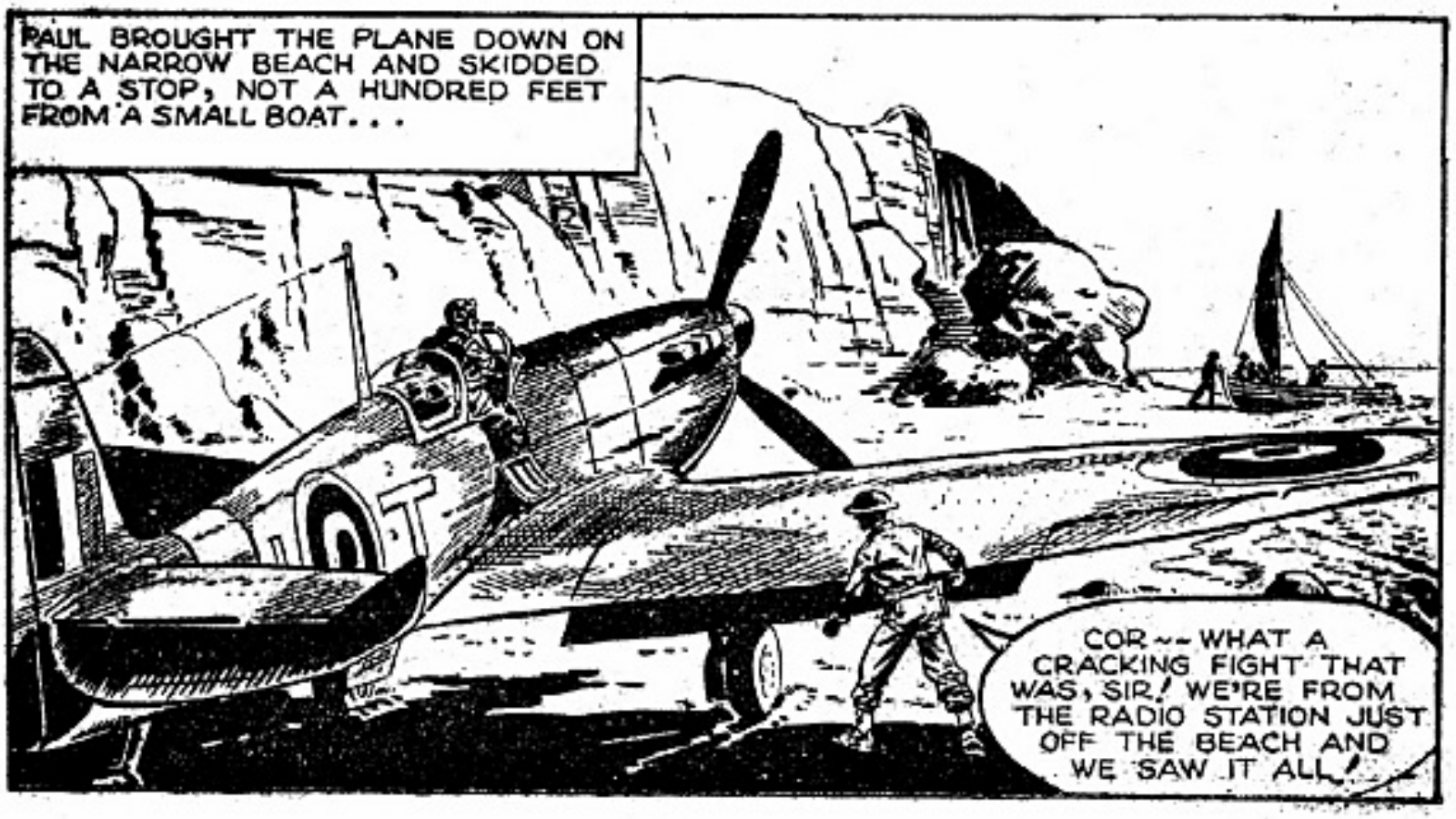

LIKE A STRIKING HAWK THE SPITFIRE HURTLED DOWN, GUNS BLAZING.


AS THE ENEMY PILOT BALED OUT, PAUL TORE THE SPITFIRE OUT OF ITS DIVE AND UP INTO A ZOOMING CLIMB....
TASTE YOUR OWN FOUL MEDICINE, BOCHE!

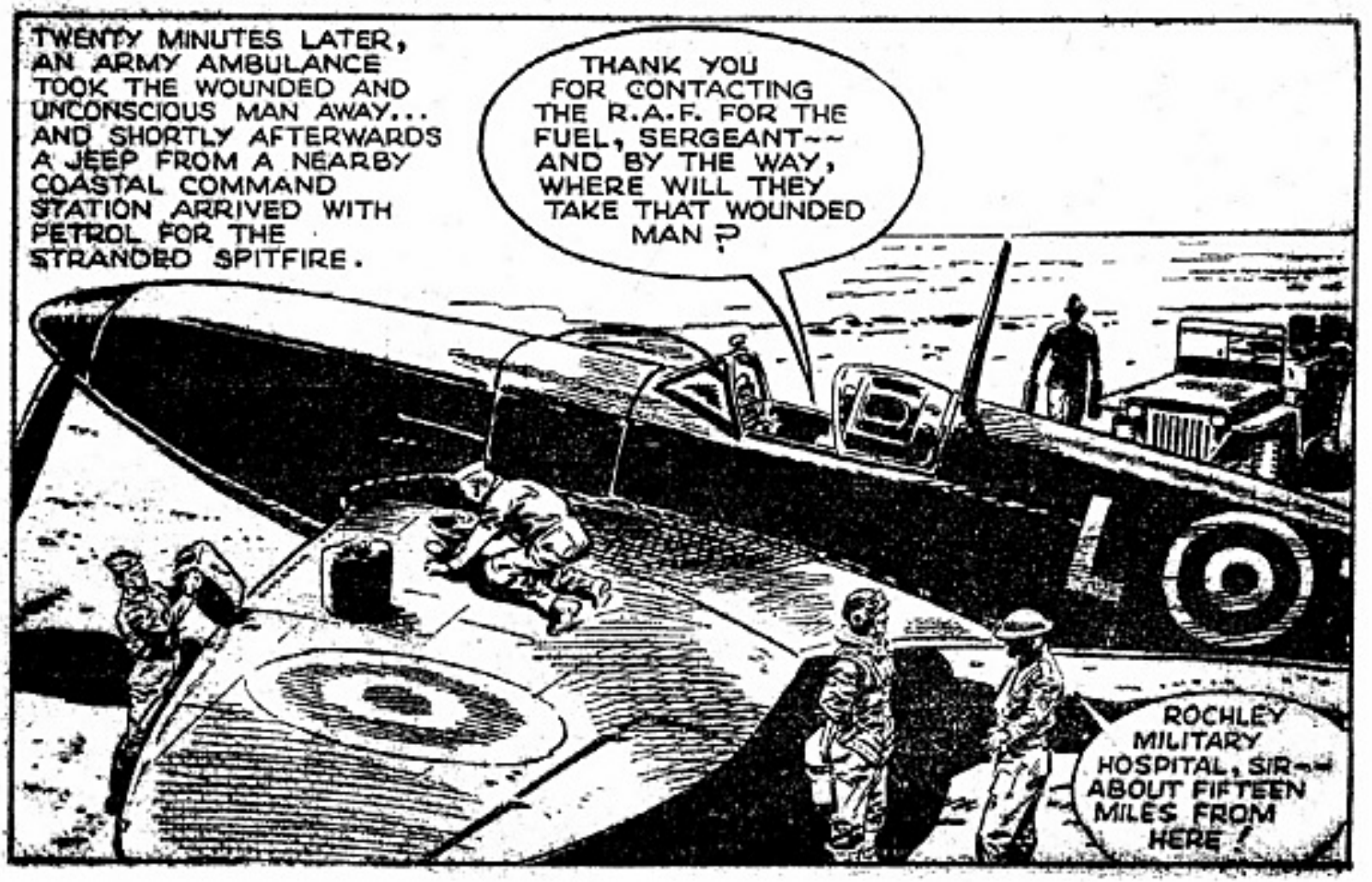

THE SECOND SHATTERED FIGHTER PLUNGED PAST THE GALLANT FRENCHMAN IN ITS DEATH DIVE... AND THEN FOR ONE BRIEF SECOND THE ACE HAD TO RUN THE GAUNTLET OF THE REMAINING GERMAN'S GUNS....
RIGHT, MON AMI -- YOU'VE HAD YOUR TURN -- YOUR FIRST AND LAST!


THE SPITFIRE SOARED IN A BREATH-TAKING HALF-LOOP ~~ AND A STREAM OF LEAD STITCHED A DEVASTATING PATTERN FROM NOSE TO TAIL ON THE GERMAN FIGHTER.
DOWN INTO THE SEA, NAZI, AND COOL OFF!


THE DOG-FIGHT HAD DRIFTED ALMOST OVER THE ENGLISH COAST ~~ LUCKILY FOR PAUL ~~ FOR A MOMENT LATER HIS ENGINE COUGHED, SPLUTTERED AND DIED.
I HOPE THAT'S THE HIGH TIDE LEVEL ~~ OR ELSE I'LL HAVE TO PADDLE HOME!


PAUL BROUGHT THE PLANE DOWN ON THE NARROW BEACH AND SKIDDED TO A STOP, NOT A HUNDRED FEET FROM A SMALL BOAT...
COR ~~ WHAT A CRACKING FIGHT THAT WAS, SIR! WE'RE FROM THE RADIO STATION JUST OFF THE BEACH AND WE SAW IT ALL!

COATES! GET UP TO THE POST AND TELEPHONE FOR AN AMBULANCE -- THIS BLOKE'S GOT A COUPLE OF JERRY BULLETS IN HIS SHOULDER!
AND WHILE YOU'RE THERE, WILL YOU GET THE AIR SEA RESCUE OUT AFTER THOSE GERMAN PILOTS!


TWENTY MINUTES LATER, AN ARMY AMBULANCE TOOK THE WOUNDED AND UNCONSCIOUS MAN AWAY... AND SHORTLY AFTERWARDS A JEEP FROM A NEARBY COASTAL COMMAND STATION ARRIVED WITH PETROL FOR THE STRANDED SPITFIRE.
THANK YOU FOR CONTACTING THE R.A.F. FOR THE FUEL, SERGEANT-- AND BY THE WAY, WHERE WILL THEY TAKE THAT WOUNDED MAN?
ROCHLEY MILITARY HOSPITAL, SIR-- ABOUT FIFTEEN MILES FROM HERE!

ONE THING IS ALMOST CERTAIN-- HE IS FRENCH! HE HAS NO IDENTITY PAPERS -- AND IS UNCONSCIOUS -- -- HE MAY BE A FRENCH REFUGEE TRYING TO GET HERE TO JOIN US -- BUT JUST TO MAKE SURE, I THINK I'LL CHECK UP ON HIM!

THE NEXT AFTERNOON PAUL GOT PERMISSION TO DRIVE OVER TO ROCHLEY MILITARY HOSPITAL...
HE'S STILL VERY WEAK, SQUADRON LEADER, AFTER THE OPERATION-- BUT I TOLD HIM YOU WERE COMING OVER AND HE'S IMPATIENT TO SEE YOU! THERE'S AN INTELLIGENCE OFFICER WITH HIM NOW, TAKING A STATEMENT.

THE ARMY SECURITY OFFICER WAS JUST ABOUT TO LEAVE AS PAUL AND THE DOCTOR ENTERED.
WELL, LIEUTENANT FABRE, YOUR STORY SOUNDS SO FANTASTIC THAT I BELIEVE IT! BUT OF COURSE YOU WILL STAY HERE UNDER GUARD UNTIL WE MAKE FURTHER ENQUIRIES!
THANK YOU, MON CAPITAINE! AH -- PERHAPS THIS IS THE MAN TO WHOM I OWE MY LIFE!

I'M SORRY I DIDN'T GET AT THOSE HUNS SOONER--TO SAVE YOU COLLECTING THEIR LEAD!
M'SIEUR, I SAW YOU DIVE ON THOSE FILTHY BOCHE A MOMENT BEFORE I WAS WOUNDED! BUT FOR YOU I WOULD NOT HAVE REACHED THE SHORE ALIVE!

WHAT'S THIS FANTASTIC STORY OF YOURS THE CAPTAIN WAS TALKING ABOUT? AND BY THE WAY, MY NAME IS PAUL BRAVE.
AND I, M'SIEUR LE COMMANDANT, AM LIEUTENANT ROGER FABRE OF THE 783RD REGIMENT INFANTERIE!

AH! THEY WERE THE FINEST FIGHTING REGIMENT IN THE FRENCH ARMY! GLORIOUS BATTLE TRADITIONS--THEY EARNED UNDYING FAME AT WATERLOO AGAINST WELLINGTON'S TROOPS, AND IN EVERY WAR SINCE THEN! BUT WE, HERE, HEARD THAT THEY'D BEEN WIPED OUT TO A MAN BY THE GERMANS!
THERE IS ONE SURVIVOR, MON AMI--ME!

AND THEN ROGER FABRE BEGAN TO TELL PAUL OF HIS FAMOUS REGIMENT'S LAST BATTLE ...
"WHEN THE GERMANS FLOODED THROUGH BELGIUM AND ACROSS FRANCE'S NORTHERN FRONTIER, WE WERE FLUNG AGAINST THEM.

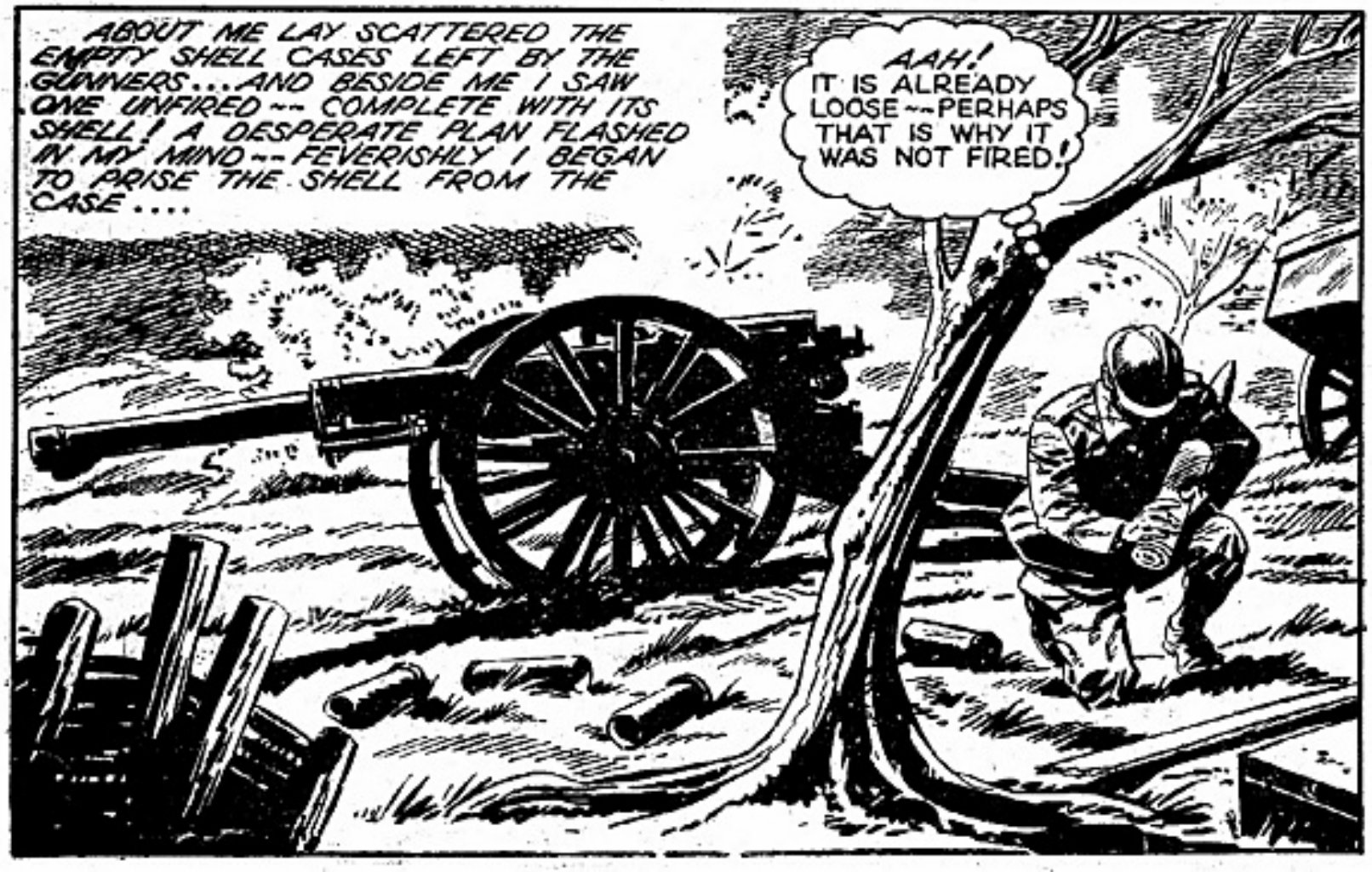
TIME AND AGAIN WE HELD THEIR ATTACKS, BUT THEN WE HAD TO FALL BACK AS THE TROOPS ON OUR FLANKS RETREATED --- BUT FOR EVERY INCH OF OUR BELOVED COUNTRY WE GAVE UP, THE BOCHE PAID DEARLY.

RIGHT ACROSS FRANCE WE FOUGHT --- AND WHEN OUR EXHAUSTED MEN COULD NO LONGER LIFT THEIR WEAPONS --- THEY DREW NEW STRENGTH AND COURAGE FROM OUR GLORIOUS BATTLE STANDARD....
THE STANDARD FIGHTS WITH YOU, MES BRAVES! SEND THOSE SCUM SCUTTLING!

IT WAS MY PRIVILEGE TO CARRY THAT PRECIOUS FLAG WHICH SYMBOLISED ALL THE HONOUR AND TRADITIONS OF MY REGIMENT AND MY COUNTRY! BUT AT LAST WE COULD RETREAT NO FURTHER....
THE GERMANS ARE ALL AROUND US. HERE WE FIGHT TO THE LAST -- HERE WE DIE! BUT THE STANDARD MUST BE SAVED! FABRE, YOU WILL TRY TO ESCAPE THROUGH THE ENEMY LINES -- BUT ON YOUR LIFE -- THAT STANDARD MUST NOT BE SULLIED BY THE HANDS OF THE HUNS!

I PROTESTED -- BUT I KNEW MY COLONEL WAS RIGHT -- THE STANDARD MUST NOT BE CAPTURED! SO I LEFT THOSE GALLANT HUNDRED MEN -- ALL THAT WERE LEFT OF THE REGIMENT -- AND CRAWLED INTO THE EVENING DARKNESS WITH THE STANDARD FOLDED INSIDE MY SHIRT.
MY COMRADES WILL NOT DIE IN VAIN -- I SWEAR! WHEREVER THIS STANDARD FLIES, MEN WILL LOOK AT IT AND REMEMBER THEIR PROUD COURAGE AND GLORY!

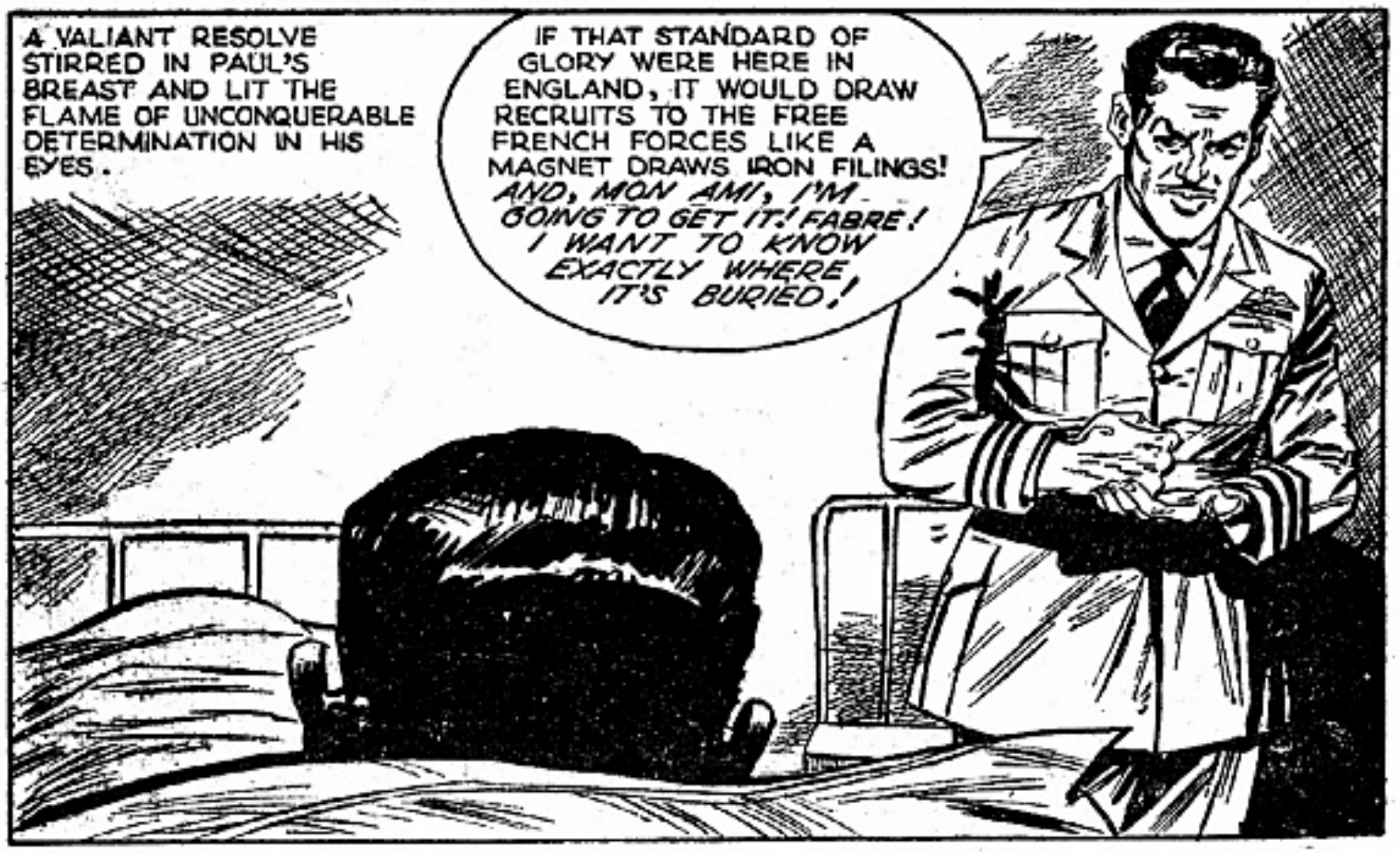
I FOUND SOME SHATTERED FRENCH SEVENTY-FIVE FIELD GUNS LYING IN MY PATH--FOR A FEW MINUTES I SHELTERED AMONGST THEM--AND THEN I SAW HOW SLIGHT MY CHANCES WERE.
ONLY BY A MIRACLE SHALL I ESCAPE THEM--BUT THEY WILL NOT TAKE ME ALIVE --AND THEY WILL NOT CAPTURE THE STANDARD!

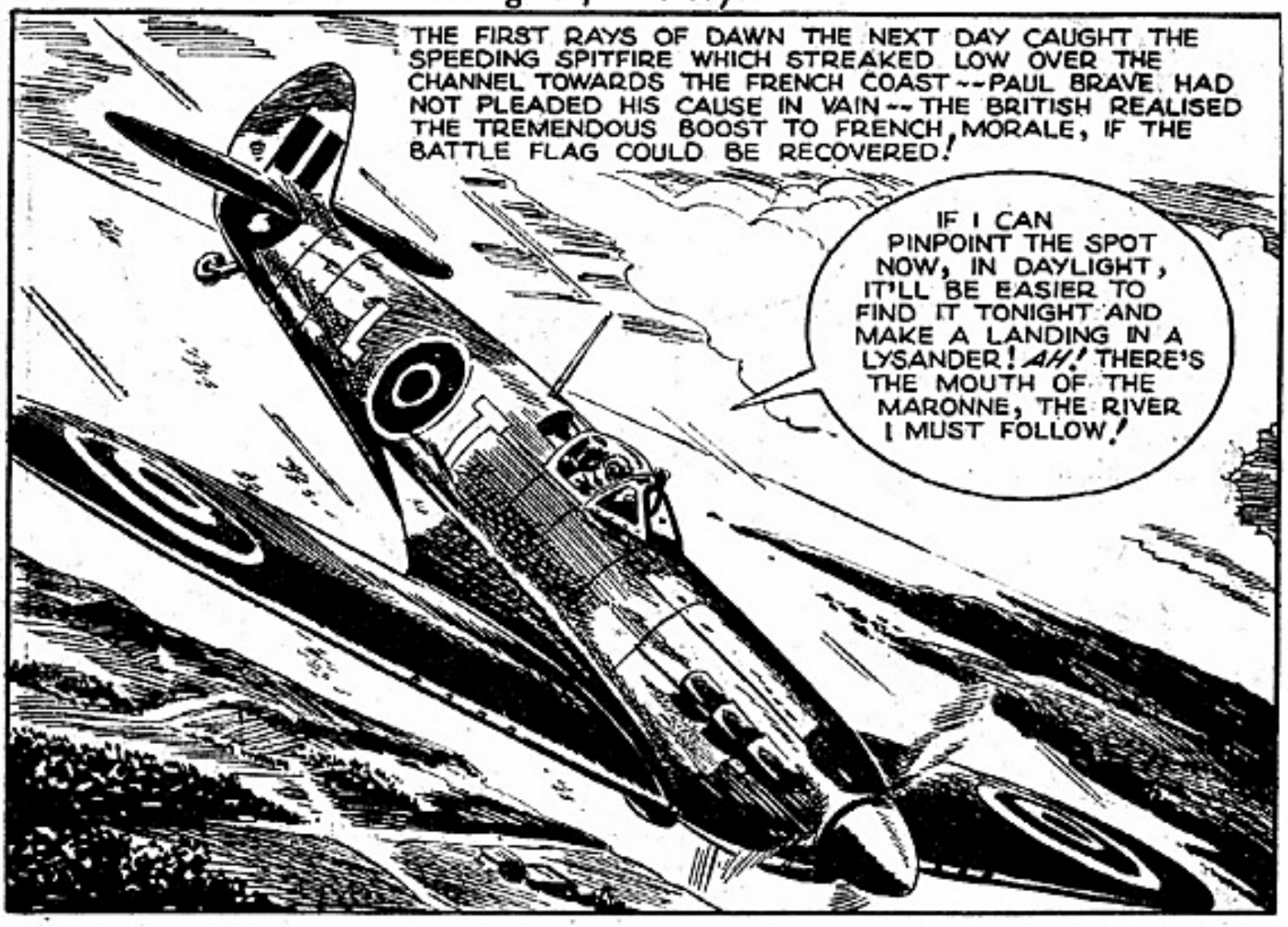

ABOUT ME LAY SCATTERED THE EMPTY SHELL CASES LEFT BY THE GUNNERS...AND BESIDE ME I SAW ONE UNFIRED -- COMPLETE WITH ITS SHELL! A DESPERATE PLAN FLASHED IN MY MIND--FEVERISHLY I BEGAN TO PRISE THE SHELL FROM THE CASE....
AAH! IT IS ALREADY LOOSE--PERHAPS THAT IS WHY IT WAS NOT FIRED!

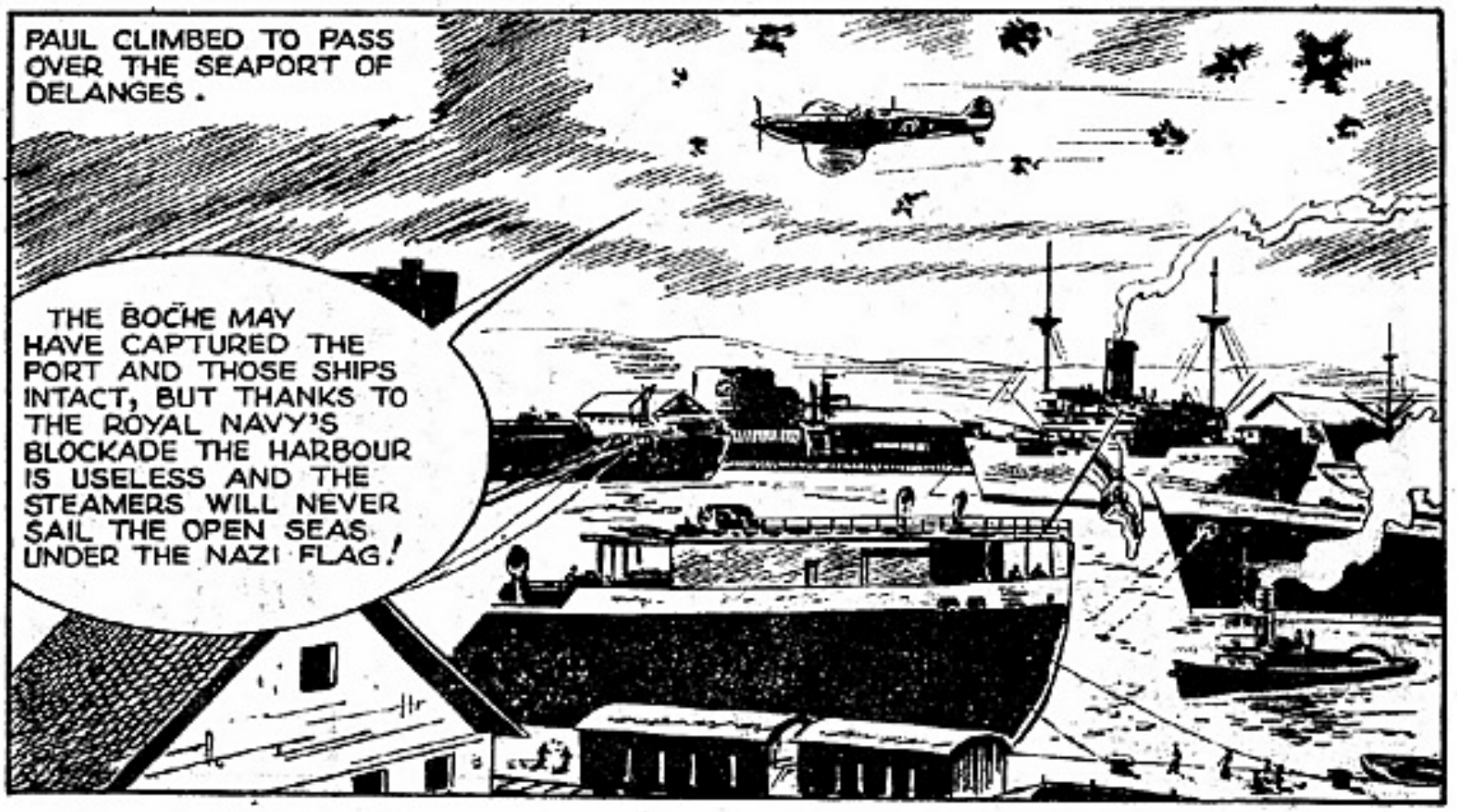
AT LAST THE SHELL CAME OUT-- I REMOVED THE CHARGE FROM THE CASE AND THEN, PULLING THE STANDARD FROM INSIDE MY JACKET, I PACKED IT INTO THE BRASS CYLINDER! QUICKLY I REPLACED THE SHELL AND THEN BEGAN TO DIG ....
I WILL REMEMBER THIS PLACE EXACTLY--FOR THERE MUST COME A TIME WHEN SOMEONE WILL RETURN FOR THE FLAG!

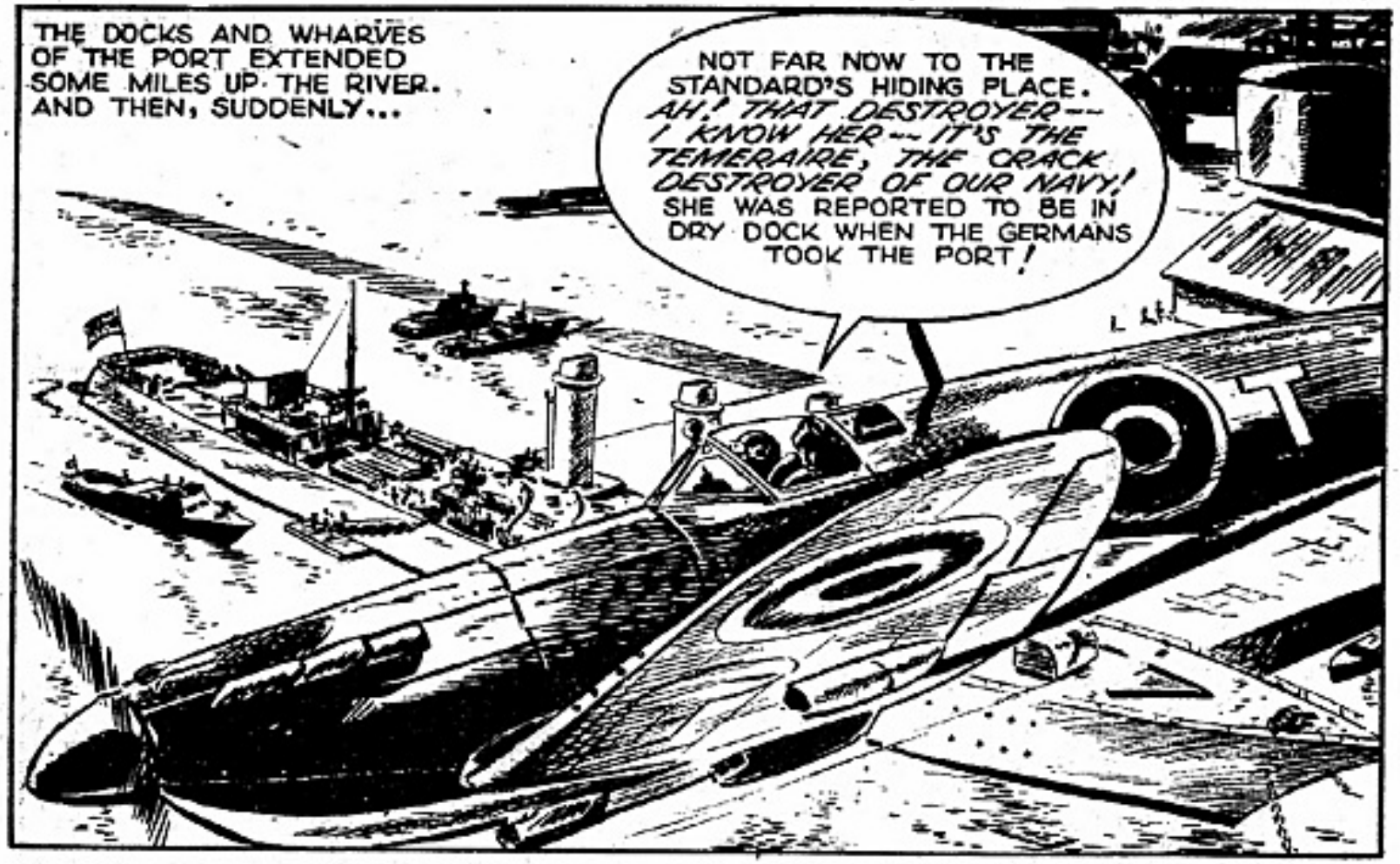
SO, WITH THE STANDARD SAFE FROM THE HUNS, I CREPT AWAY FROM THAT PLACE, EXPECTING CAPTURE AT EVERY SECOND! BUT SUDDENLY THE BRIGHT MOONLIGHT WAS GONE AS BLACK CLOUDS SCUDDED ACROSS THE SKY.
HALTEN ZIE! THE ADVANCE STOPS UNTIL THERE IS MORE LIGHT! IN THIS DARKNESS THOSE FIENDISH FRENCHMEN HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF THEIR POSITIONS!

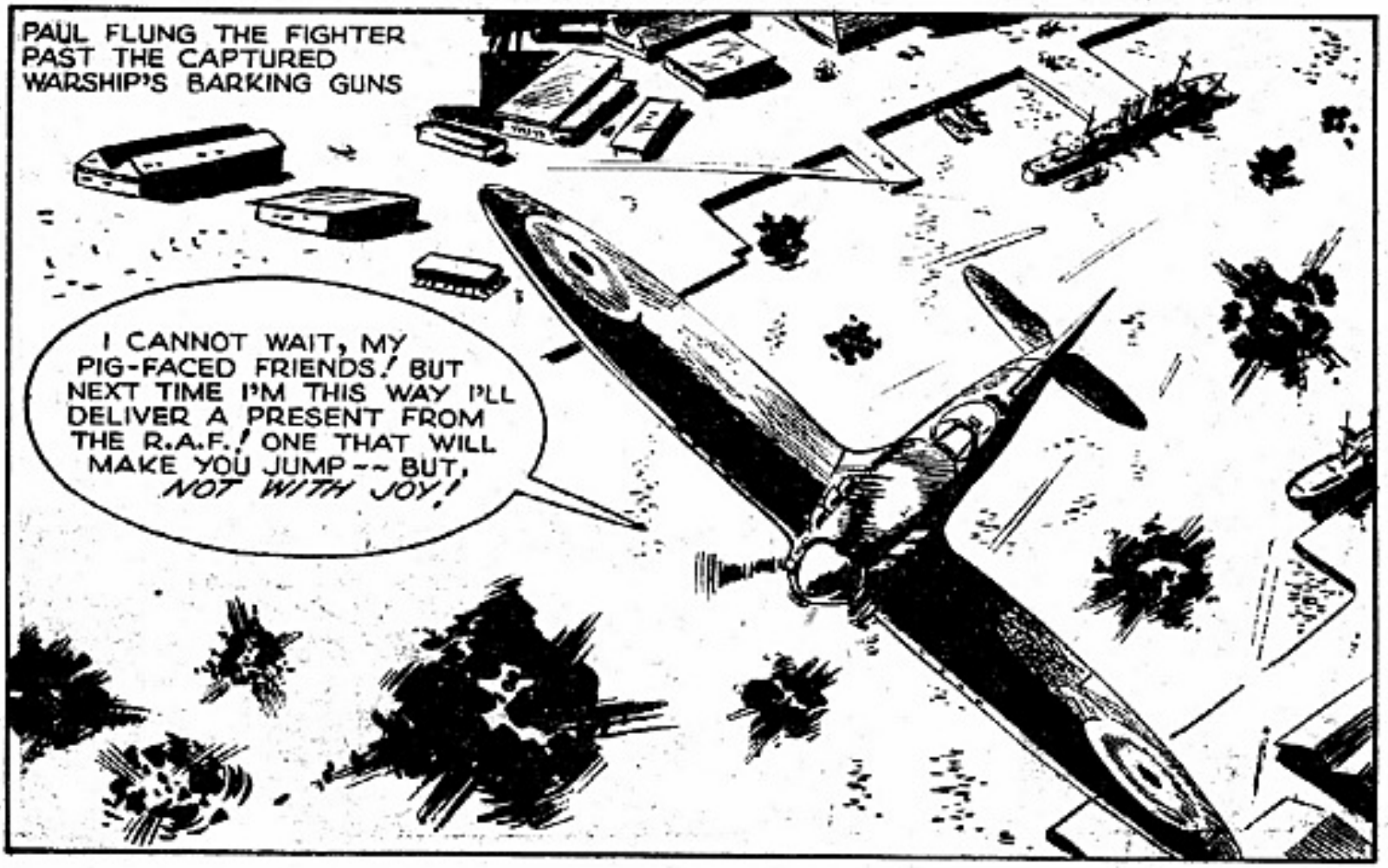
ROGER FABRE'S VOICE DIED AWAY FOR A MOMENT ~~ AND THEN A WRY SMILE TWISTED HIS DRAWN FACE.
IT WAS A MIRACLE ~~ FOR WHILE THE BOCHE HALTED IN THAT BLACKNESS I SLIPPED THROUGH THEIR LINES! I FOUND SHELTER IN A FARMHOUSE AND FOR THREE MONTHS I WAS HIDDEN FROM THE SEARCHING HUNS BY THE FARMER. TWO NIGHTS AGO I REACHED THE COAST, STOLE A BOAT, AND YOU KNOW THE REST!
HA! WHAT A STORY OF HEROISM AND COURAGE! VIVE LA FRANCE!


A VALIANT RESOLVE STIRRED IN PAUL'S BREAST AND LIT THE FLAME OF UNCONQUERABLE DETERMINATION IN HIS EYES.
IF THAT STANDARD OF GLORY WERE HERE IN ENGLAND, IT WOULD DRAW RECRUITS TO THE FREE FRENCH FORCES LIKE A MAGNET DRAWS IRON FILINGS! AND, MON AMI, I'M GOING TO GET IT! FABRE! I WANT TO KNOW EXACTLY WHERE IT'S BURIED!


THE FIRST RAYS OF DAWN THE NEXT DAY CAUGHT THE SPEEDING SPITFIRE WHICH STREAKED LOW OVER THE CHANNEL TOWARDS THE FRENCH COAST--PAUL BRAVE HAD NOT PLEADED HIS CAUSE IN VAIN--THE BRITISH REALISED THE TREMENDOUS BOOST TO FRENCH MORALE, IF THE BATTLE FLAG COULD BE RECOVERED!
IF I CAN PINPOINT THE SPOT NOW, IN DAYLIGHT, IT'LL BE EASIER TO FIND IT TONIGHT AND MAKE A LANDING IN A LYSANDER! AH! THERE'S THE MOUTH OF THE MARONNE, THE RIVER I MUST FOLLOW!


PAUL CLIMBED TO PASS OVER THE SEAPORT OF DELANGES.
THE BOCHE MAY HAVE CAPTURED THE PORT AND THOSE SHIPS INTACT, BUT THANKS TO THE ROYAL NAVY'S BLOCKADE THE HARBOUR IS USELESS AND THE STEAMERS WILL NEVER SAIL THE OPEN SEAS UNDER THE NAZI FLAG!


THE DOCKS AND WHARVES OF THE PORT EXTENDED SOME MILES UP THE RIVER. AND THEN, SUDDENLY...
NOT FAR NOW TO THE STANDARD'S HIDING PLACE. AH! THAT DESTROYER-- I KNOW HER-- IT'S THE TEMERAIRE, THE CRACK DESTROYER OF OUR NAVY! SHE WAS REPORTED TO BE IN DRY DOCK WHEN THE GERMANS TOOK THE PORT!

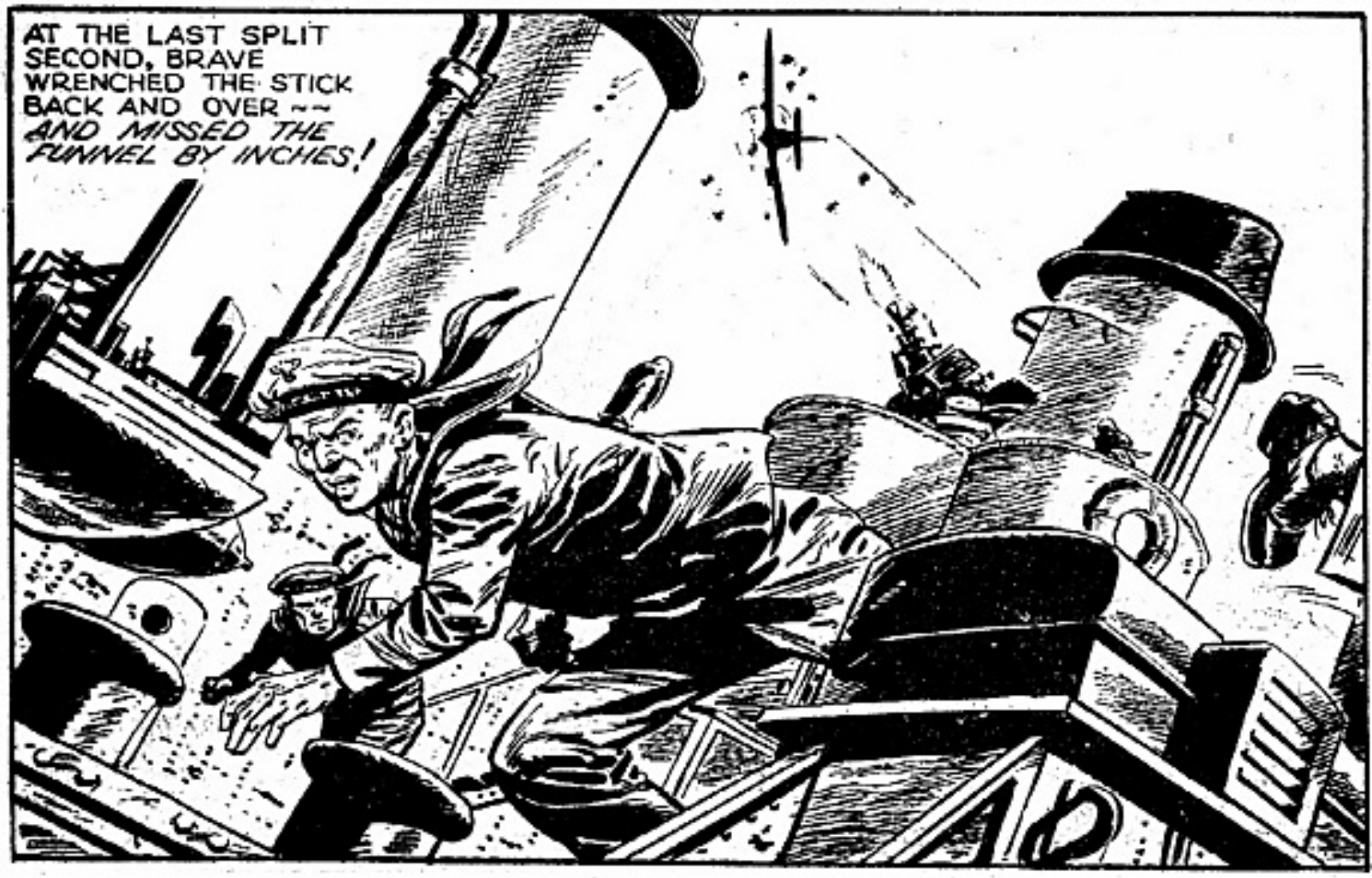

PAUL FLUNG THE FIGHTER PAST THE CAPTURED WARSHIP'S BARKING GUNS
I CANNOT WAIT, MY PIG-FACED FRIENDS! BUT NEXT TIME I'M THIS WAY I'LL DELIVER A PRESENT FROM THE R.A.F.! ONE THAT WILL MAKE YOU JUMP-- BUT, NOT WITH JOY!

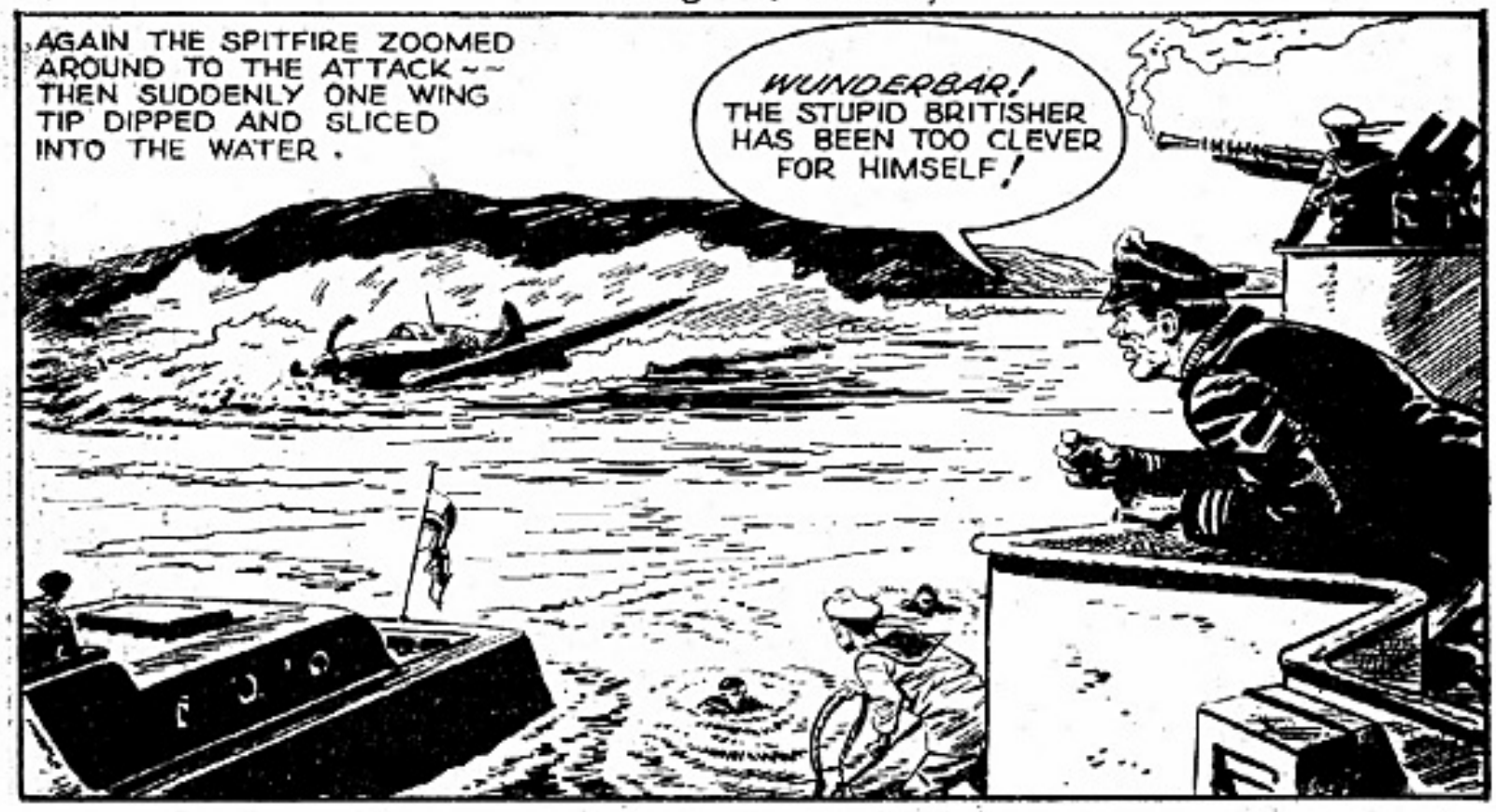
THE SPITFIRE ROARED UP THE RIVER FOR ANOTHER MILE, WITH PAUL SEARCHING FOR VITAL LANDMARKS. HE FOUND THEM --AND GASPED WITH AMAZEMENT.
THERE IT IS! DIRECTLY BETWEEN THAT HILLOCK ON THE LEFT BANK AND THAT ONE ON THE OTHER SIDE -- NOM D'UN CHIEN!. THE BOCHE HAS BUILT A CAMP RIGHT ON THE VERY SPOT!

THEN, IN THE NEXT FLEETING SECOND, PAUL REALISED SOMETHING ELSE--IT WAS A PRISONER-OF-WAR CAMP!
VIVE LE R.A.F.! HURRAH!
STOP, YOU FRENCH SCUM! CEASE, OR WE OPEN FIRE!

THE YOUNG FRENCHMAN SLAMMED THE FIGHTER INTO A SKIDDING TURN, AND SCREAMED LOW ACROSS THE COMPOUND.
AWAY GOES MY PLAN FOR PICKING UP THAT STANDARD TONIGHT WITHOUT BOTHERING ANYBODY! BUT I MUST GET IT-- AND I THINK I KNOW JUST HOW!

A FEW MINUTES LATER THE GERMAN CREW OF THE CAPTURED FRENCH DESTROYER GOT THE SHOCK OF THEIR LIVES.
AACH! THE ENGLISCHER AGAIN! HE IS MAD-- HE IS GOING TO CRASH INTO US!


AT THE LAST SPLIT SECOND, BRAVE WRENCHED THE STICK BACK AND OVER -- AND MISSED THE FUNNEL BY INCHES!


AGAIN THE SPITFIRE ZOOMED AROUND TO THE ATTACK -- THEN SUDDENLY ONE WING TIP DIPPED AND SLICED INTO THE WATER.
WUNDERBAR! THE STUPID BRITISHER HAS BEEN TOO CLEVER FOR HIMSELF!

LITTLE REALISING THAT THEY WERE WATCHING A BRILLIANT EXHIBITION OF FLYING SKILL, THE GLEEFUL GERMANS SAW THE SPITFIRE PLOUGH INTO THE WATER.
MAN THE MOTOR LAUNCH -- PICK UP OUR OWN MEN -- AND MAYBE THAT DUMKOPF PILOT IS STILL ALIVE!

PAUL LEAPED FROM THE SINKING PLANE AS THE LAUNCH RACED ALONGSIDE.
YOU TOOK YOUR TIME GETTING HERE!
THERE WAS NO HURRY, ENGLISCHER DOG --FOR YOU THE WAR IS OVER!

PAUL INSTANTLY DECIDED TO PLAY UP TO THE GERMANS' IDEA THAT HE WAS ENGLISH, AND HE GRINNED CHEERFULLY AS HE STOOD BEFORE THE GERMAN COMMANDER.
SORRY-- I DIDN'T KNOW I WAS MEETING AN ADMIRAL OF THE LOCAL FERRY BOAT SERVICE!
BAH! THE MAN IS AN IDIOT-- TAKE HIM AWAY--DELIVER HIM TO THE PRISONER-OF-WAR CAMP AT ONCE!

PAUL WAS TAKEN TO THE CAMP A MILE AWAY.
HE LIKED THE LOOK OF OUR LITTLE REST CAMP FROM THE AIR -- SO HE CAME BACK AS A GUEST!
BUT YOU'RE GOING TO PAY FOR IT, BOCHE!

WILLING HANDS HELPED THE YOUNG PILOT TO HIS FEET.
FROM WHAT THAT HUN HYENA HAS SAID, YOU WERE THAT PILOT WHOM WE WERE CHEERING AN HOUR AGO!
BELIEVE IT OR NOT, I'M VERY HAPPY TO BE HERE! WHAT EXACTLY IS THIS PLACE?

IT IS A TRANSIT CAMP! THE GERMANS STILL SCOUR THE COUNTRY-SIDE FOR FRENCH SOLDIERS IN HIDING. WHEN THEY ARE CAUGHT, THEY ARE COLLECTED HERE BEFORE BEING TRANSPORTED TO PROPER PRISON CAMPS IN GERMANY! WHILE WE ARE HERE. WE LOAD AND UNLOAD THOSE BARGES FOR THE BOCHE !

THEN PAUL BEGAN TO SPEAK SWIFTLY--AND THE FRENCH OFFICER'S AMAZEMENT GREW. FINALLY HE NODDED AND WALKED AWAY, LEAVING PAUL TO FIND A CERTAIN SPOT.
NOW, I'M DIRECTLY BETWEEN THE TWO HILLOCKS; AND THE SOUTH END OF THAT WOOD IS IN DIRECT LINE WITH ME! THIS IS IT! I'M RIGHT ON TOP OF THAT SHELL AND THE STANDARD!

TEN MINUTES LATER, THE BULL-NECKED SERGEANT IN CHARGE OF THE GERMAN SENTRIES GLARED INTO THE COMPOUND
FRENCH CLODS! THEY ARE CROWDING TOGETHER AGAINST MY ORDERS! FOUR OF YOU WILL GO IN WITH ME-- AND WE'LL TEACH THEM TO OBEY THEIR MASTERS!
JAWOHL, SERGEANT!

WEAPONS READY, THE GERMAN GUARDS MARCHED ACROSS THE COMPOUND.
DISPERSE AND KEEP MOVING, YOU DOGS! HIMMEL! SO IT WAS A TRICK TO CONCEAL THE ENGLISCHER FLYER WHILE HE BURIED SOMETHING!
OH, YOU THICK-HEADED PIG -- HOW WRONG YOU ARE!

I GIVE YOU MY WORD, I WASN'T BURYING ANYTHING!

DONNERWETTER! YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE YOU? NOW YOU ARE GOING TO DIG IT UP AGAIN!

A SPADE HAD TO BE FETCHED BY ONE OF THE GERMANS FROM THE GUARD HUT, AND SHRUGGING HIS SHOULDERS RESIGNEDLY, PAUL BEGAN TO DIG!

JA-- LET THE PIGS WATCH! LET THEM SEE THAT I -- SERGEANT OTTO KLUMPF -- CANNOT BE FOOLED BY A STUPID BRITISHER! HE HAD A SECRET TO HIDE -- BUT I WILL HAVE IT!

WITH THE FULL WEIGHT OF PAUL'S BROAD SHOULDERS BEHIND IT, THE SPADE HIT DEEPLY INTO THE EARTH -- AND THEN IT CLANGED ON METAL.

ACH -- SO WE HAVE FOUND IT! NOW DIG IT OUT WITH YOUR HANDS, FOOL -- YOU ARE NOT GOING TO DAMAGE IT ON PURPOSE WITH THAT SPADE!

YOU'RE THE CHIEF MAN -- FOR ABOUT ANOTHER TWO MINUTES!

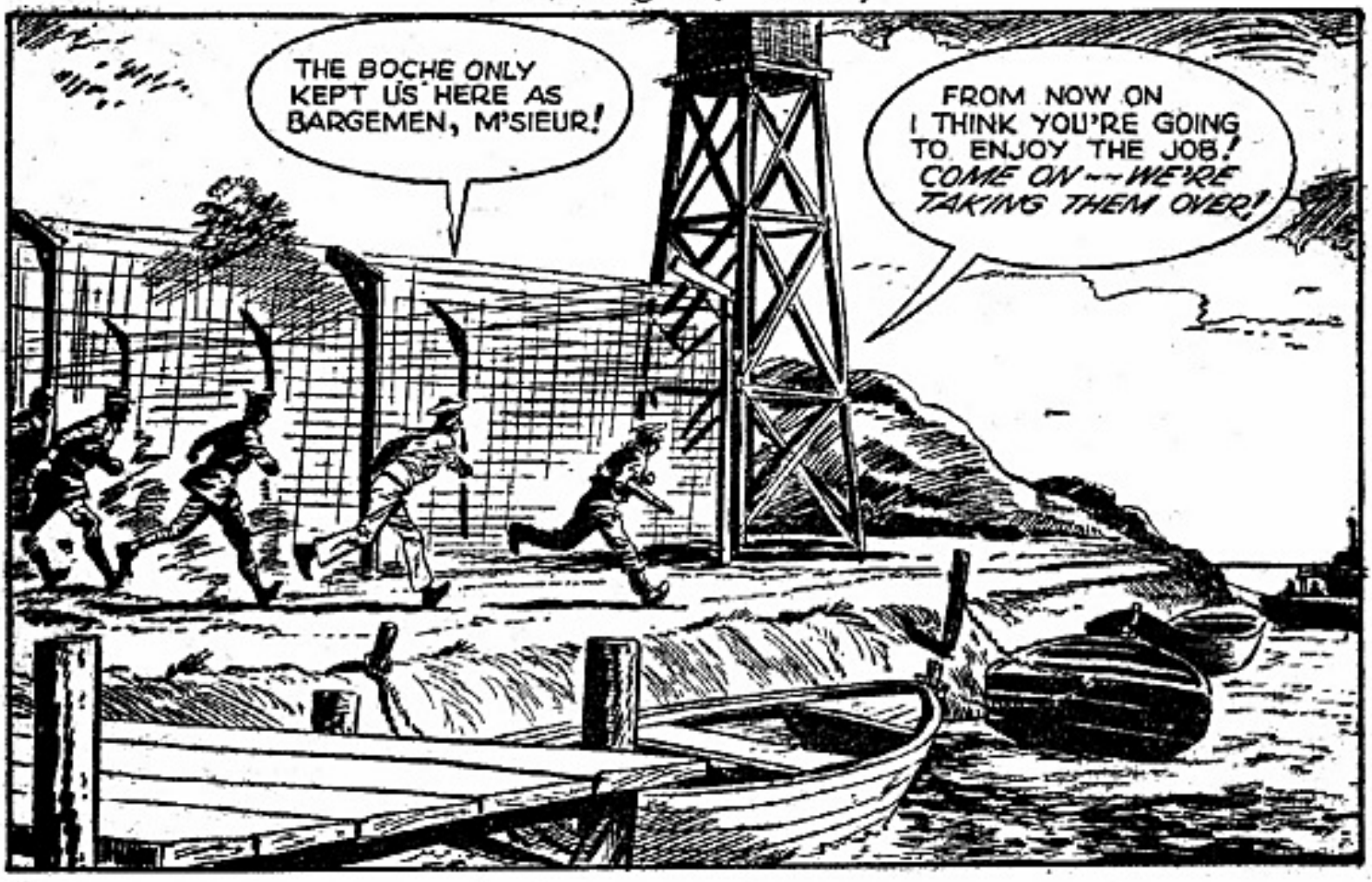
THE FRENCHMAN KNELT, GRASPED AND PULLED-- AND WHAT HAPPENED NEXT WAS TOO FAST FOR THE ARROGANT GERMAN TO FOLLOW
ONE MOVE FROM ANY OF YOU BOCHE BLOCKHEADS AND I'LL HIT THE FUSE OF THIS SHELL!

WITH TERROR-FILLED EYES RIVETED ON THE SHELL, THE GUARDS STOOD PETRIFIED AS PAUL NODDED TO THE FRENCH PRISONERS NEARBY.
BIEN, FRIENDS -- CLOSE UP IN A GROUP NICE AND SLOWLY SO THE OTHER SENTRIES WON'T GET SUSPICIOUS!

THEN WITH LIGHTNING SPEED PAUL DROPPED THE SPADE AND SWEPT UP THE SHELL -- WITH THE NOSE POINTING DOWN...
THIS SHELL IS FUSED! WELL, SERGEANT PIG -- DO I DROP IT?
NO -- NO! ANYTHING BUT THAT!
ANYTHING? BIEN -- START MARCHING BACK TO THE GATE -- WITH ME IN THE MIDDLE OF YOU ALL -- AND THE PRISONERS BEHIND US!

AS THE GATE WAS OPENED BY THE UNSUSPECTING SENTRIES, THE WHITE FACED GUARDS ESCORTED PAUL THROUGH, AND AGAIN THE FRENCHMAN LIFTED THE SHELL MENACINGLY
TELL YOUR OTHER PET BLOCKHEADS TO LEAVE THE GATE OPEN FOR MY FRIENDS -- OR.....!
JA-JA! DO AS HE SAYS -- HE IS MAD ENOUGH TO KILL US ALL!

THE FRENCH PRISONERS FLOODED THROUGH THE OPEN GATE. ROUGH HANDS SEIZED THE GERMANS AND SWEPT THEM INTO THE GUARD HUT...
THEY WON'T BOTHER ANYBODY FOR MANY HOURS, M'SIEUR!
WONDERFUL! NOW WE'VE GOT TO GET AWAY FROM HERE -- BUT QUICKLY! AND YOU SAILORS ARE JUST THE MEN I NEED!

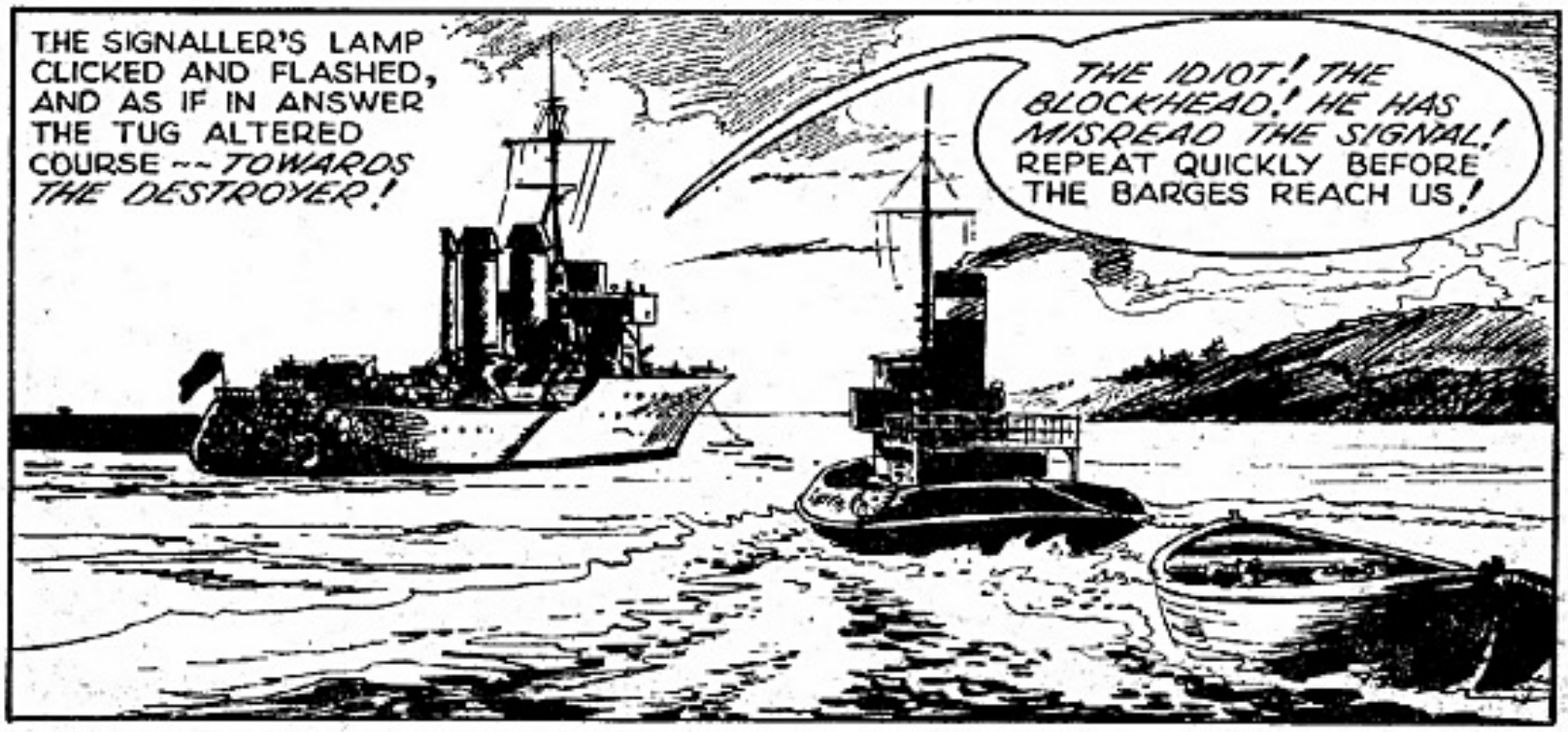

THE BOCHE ONLY KEPT US HERE AS BARGEMEN, M'SIEUR!
FROM NOW ON I THINK YOU'RE GOING TO ENJOY THE JOB! COME ON ~~ WE'RE TAKING THEM OVER!

LIKE A FLOOD THE JUBILANT FRENCHMEN SWEPT TOWARDS THE EMPTY BARGES ~~ AND PAUL RACED DOWN THE RIVER BANK TOWARDS THE TUG!
THE PRISONERS HAVE ESCAPED! QUICK ~~ WE MUST CAST OFF AND GET AWAY!

BUT THE NEXT SECOND IT WAS TOO LATE ~~ FOR A FIGHTING THUNDERBOLT LANDED AMONGST THEM
OOOOF!

THE SLEDGEHAMMER FIST OF THE FRENCH SERGEANT DROPPED THE REMAINING CREWMAN: A MOMENT LATER THREE LIMP FORMS SPLASHED INTO THE RIVER.
THE WATER WILL REVIVE THEM--AND IF THEY CAN'T SWIM, THEY WILL SOON LEARN!
PASS THE WORD DOWN TO THE BARGES--- STAND BY TO CAST OFF!

SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, THE OFFICER ON WATCH ON THE CAPTURED FRENCH DESTROYER GLANCED UP RIVER--AND BARKED A COMMAND TO A NEARBY SIGNALLER.
ACH! THOSE CURSED BARGES AGAIN! SIGNAL THE TUG TO STEER WELL CLEAR--I DON'T WANT THOSE BARGES SWINGING INTO US!


THE SIGNALLER'S LAMP CLICKED AND FLASHED, AND AS IF IN ANSWER THE TUG ALTERED COURSE--TOWARDS THE DESTROYER!
THE IDIOT! THE BLOCKHEAD! HE HAS MISREAD THE SIGNAL! REPEAT QUICKLY BEFORE THE BARGES REACH US!

BUT STILL THE TUG CAMB ON--AND ITS HELMSMAN BROUGHT THE BARGES SLIDING ACROSS THE RIVER TO GRATE ALONGSIDE THE DESTROYER.
AWAY BOARDING PARTY! INTO THE DEVILS, YOU FIGHTING SONS OF FRANCE!
AAAGH! THE MAD ENGLISCHER FLYER AGAIN.

I AM PLACED IN CHARGE OF THIS SHELL, BUT IT WILL NOT STOP ME FIGHTING THESE SCUM!
WELL DONE, SERGEANT-- BUT MIND WHICH END YOU HIT THEM WITH!

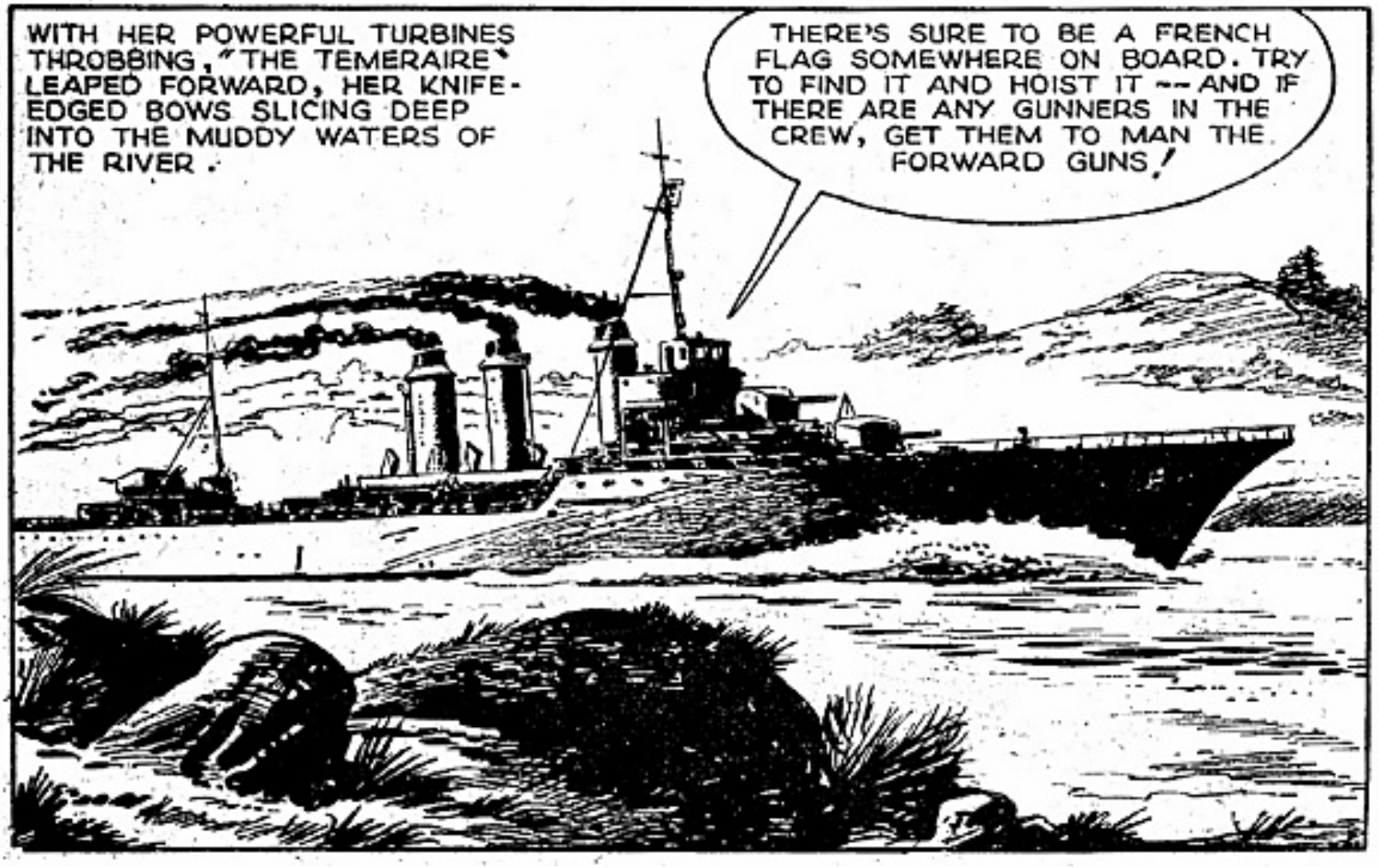
DRAWN BY THE TUMULT, THE GERMAN CAPTAIN CHARGED ON DECK ~~ AND STOPPED DEAD ~~ STUNNED BY THE SIGHT OF HIS SENSELESS CREW STREWN AROUND HIM.
DONNERWETTER! WHO ... WHO HAS DONE THIS?
WE HAVE, MY FRIEND ~~ THE FREE FRENCH!

THE GERMAN SPRANG AT PAUL ~~ AND RIGHT INTO A JAW CRACKING UPPERCUT.
NO ARGUMENTS, BOCHE ~~ WE ARE IN A HURRY!

THE FIGHTING FRENCHMEN SWEPT THROUGH THE SHIP LIKE A TEMPEST AND IN FIVE MINUTES IT WAS ALL OVER . . .
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH ALL THIS UNWANTED CARGO ?
THOSE EMPTY BARGES NEED SOME BALLAST, SO LOAD THEM WITH THE BOCHE !

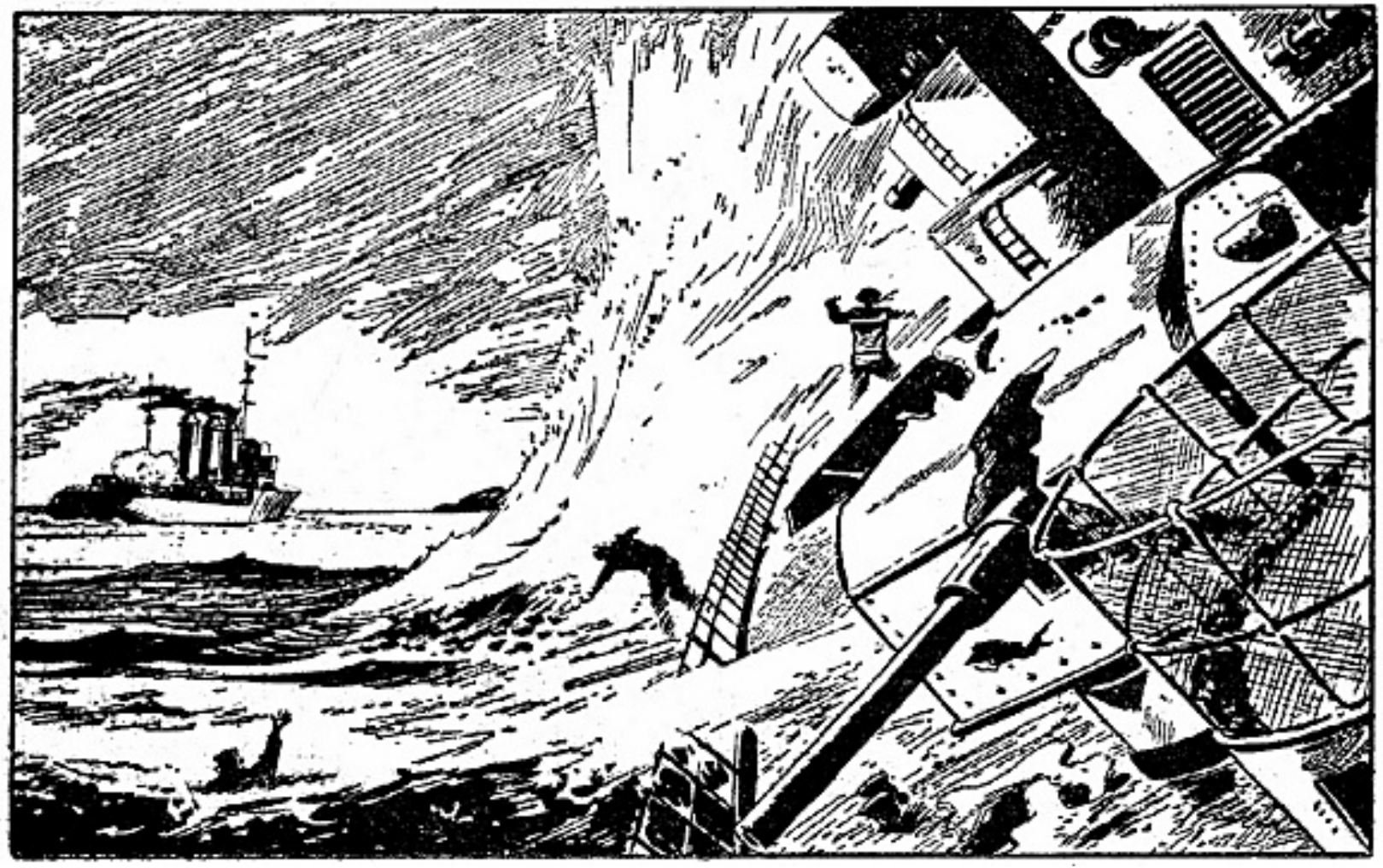
AS THE HALF-SENSELESS GERMANS WERE BEING PACKED INTO THE BARGES, PAUL SOUGHT OUT THE SAILORS AMONGST THE FRENCH PRISONERS .
THIS IS A FRENCH SHIP AGAIN ! AND IT'S GOING TO JOIN THE FREE FRENCH NAVY ! GET DOWN TO THE ENGINE ROOM AND STAND BY FOR MY ORDERS TO MOVE . WE'RE LUCKY THE GERMANS KEPT UP A GOOD HEAD OF STEAM !
WE HAVE CAST OFF THE BARGES AND ALREADY MOST OF THE BOCHE LOOK SEA-SICK !

SOON ENOUGH STEAM FOR STEERAGE WAS BUILT UP AND TAKING THE WHEEL ON THE BRIDGE, PAUL EDGED THE SLEEK DESTROYER OUT INTO THE RIVER.
WHAT SHALL I DO WITH THIS SHELL NOW, M'SIEUR?
YOU CAN TAKE IT TO PIECES, SERGEANT!

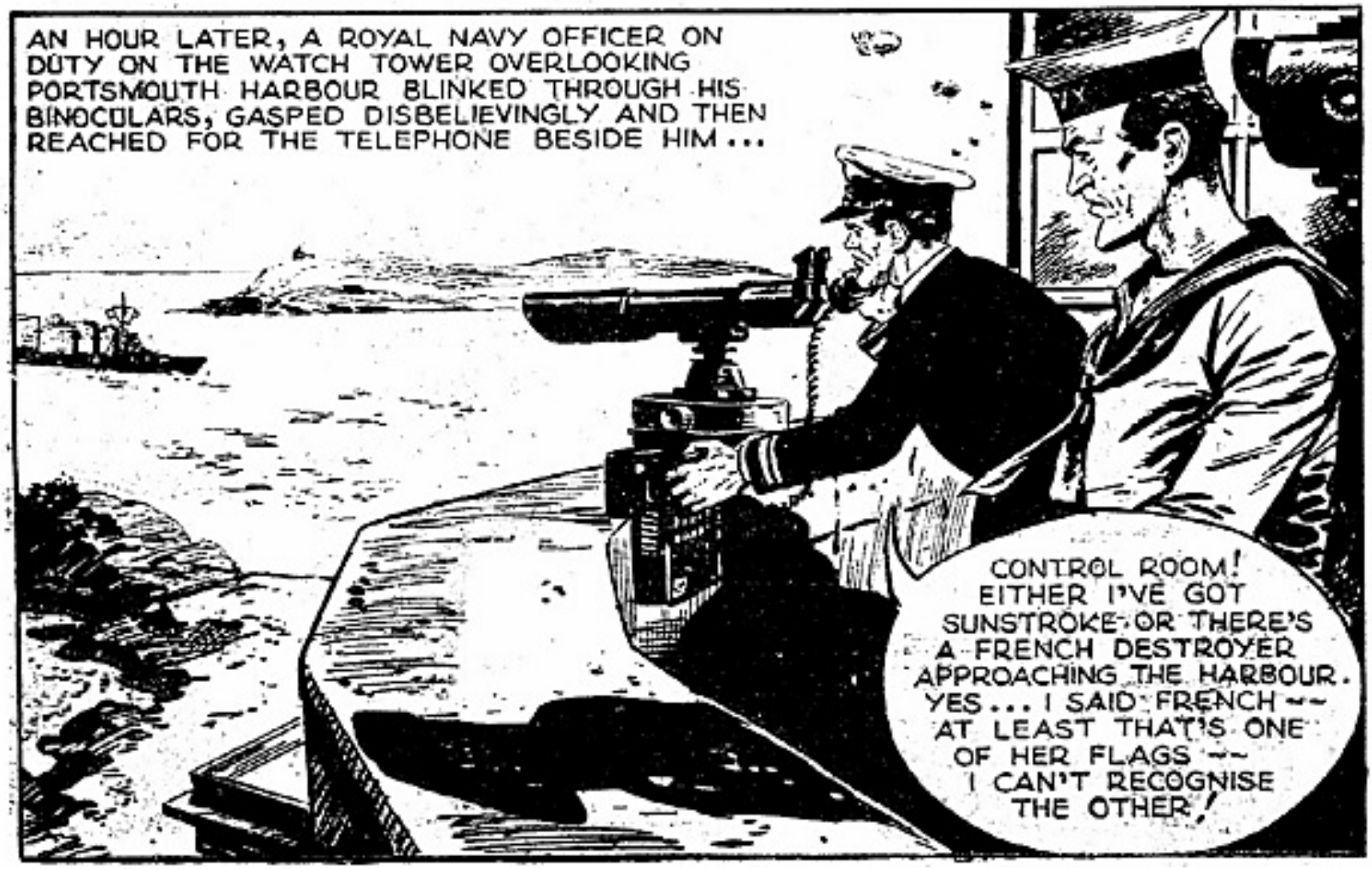

WITH HER POWERFUL TURBINES THROBBING, "THE TEMERAIRE" LEAPED FORWARD, HER KNIFE-EDGED BOWS SLICING DEEP INTO THE MUDDY WATERS OF THE RIVER.
THERE'S SURE TO BE A FRENCH FLAG SOMEWHERE ON BOARD. TRY TO FIND IT AND HOIST IT -- AND IF THERE ARE ANY GUNNERS IN THE CREW, GET THEM TO MAN THE FORWARD GUNS!

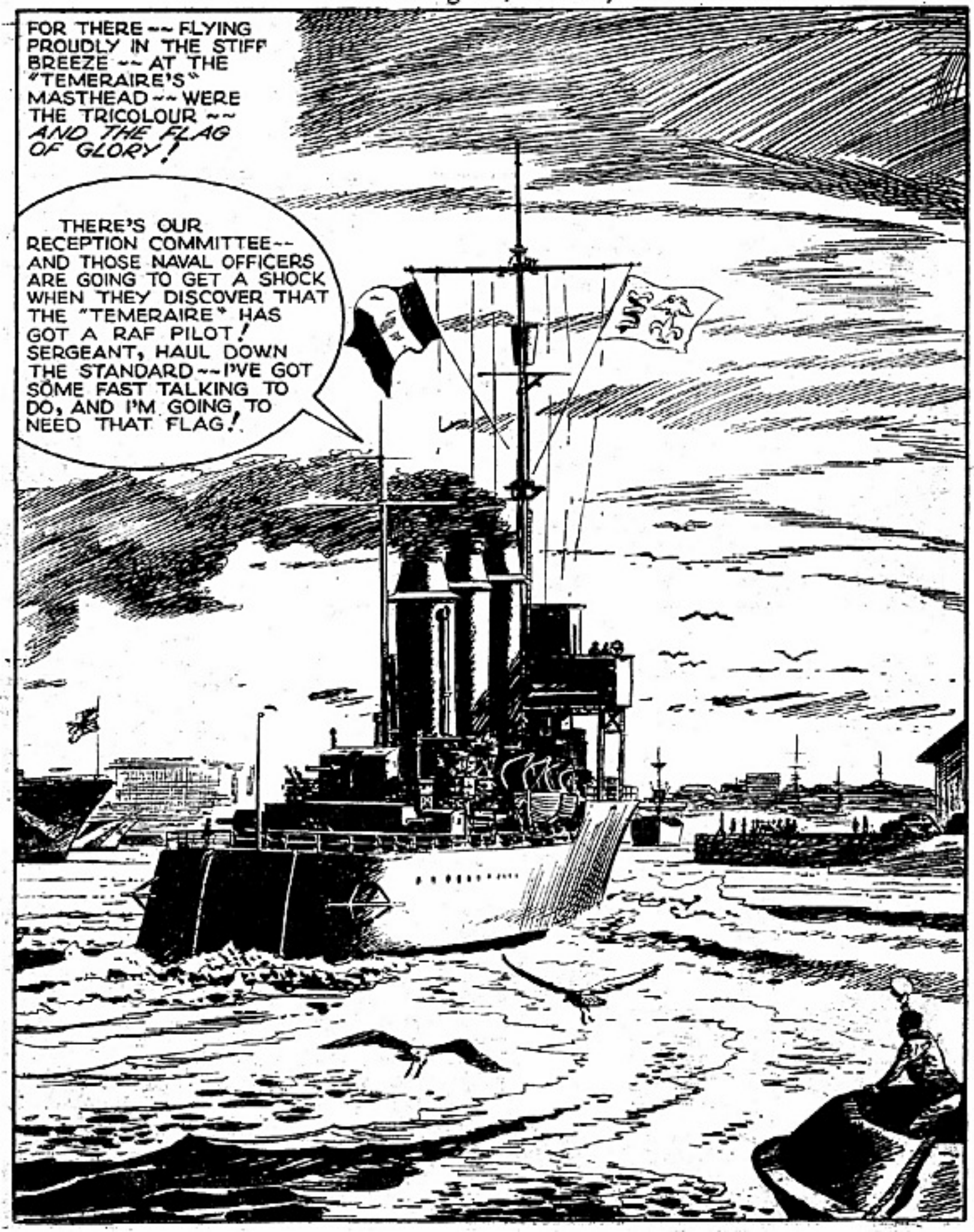
ALMOST COMPLETELY CLOSED BY THE ALLIED BLOCKADE, THE PORT OF DELANGES WAS FULL OF CAPTURED FRENCH SHIPPING AND ALSO.
FORWARD GUNS? SEE THOSE 'E' BOATS AND THEIR BIG BROTHER DESTROYER? LOAD UP AND GET READY TO TURN 'EM INTO SCRAP!

THE TWIN-GUN TURRETS ON THE FOREDECK SWUNG INTO MENACING LINE AS THE WARSHIP SLICED THROUGH THE HARBOUR.
ON TARGET! LET THEM HAVE IT AGAIN!



A WILD CHEER FLOATED BACK FROM THE "TEMERAIRE" AS SHE SPED AWAY FROM THE DEVASTATED GERMAN SHIPS IN THE HARBOUR.
SO THIS IS WHY YOU GOT YOURSELF CAPTURED--TO RESCUE ONE OF FRANCE'S GREATEST TREASURES!
YES, THE FLAG OF GLORY! SERGEANT, THIS IS WHAT I WANT YOU TO DO WITH IT.


AN HOUR LATER, A ROYAL NAVY OFFICER ON DUTY ON THE WATCH TOWER OVERLOOKING PORTSMOUTH HARBOUR BLINKED THROUGH HIS BINOCULARS, GASPED DISBELIEVINGLY AND THEN REACHED FOR THE TELEPHONE BESIDE HIM...
CONTROL ROOM! EITHER I'VE GOT SUNSTROKE OR THERE'S A FRENCH DESTROYER APPROACHING THE HARBOUR. YES... I SAID FRENCH -- AT LEAST THAT'S ONE OF HER FLAGS -- I CAN'T RECOGNISE THE OTHER!


FOR THERE -- FLYING PROUDLY IN THE STIFF BREEZE -- AT THE "TEMERAIRE'S" MASTHEAD -- WERE THE TRICOLOUR -- AND THE FLAG OF GLORY!
THERE'S OUR RECEPTION COMMITTEE -- AND THOSE NAVAL OFFICERS ARE GOING TO GET A SHOCK WHEN THEY DISCOVER THAT THE "TEMERAIRE" HAS GOT A RAF PILOT! SERGEANT, HAUL DOWN THE STANDARD -- I'VE GOT SOME FAST TALKING TO DO, AND I'M GOING TO NEED THAT FLAG!

BUT WHEN PAUL BRAVE MADE HIS AMAZING REPORT TO THE SENIOR NAVAL OFFICERS WAITING ON THE QUAYSIDE, HE WAS ANSWERED WITH DISBELIEVING STARES -- UNTIL ....
SIR -- THIS MESSAGE HAS COME FROM WHITEHALL -- THE OFFICER IS RIGHT -- IT'S ALL IN THE MESSAGE HERE!
BY JOVE, CARRUTHERS, SO IT IS!

THE LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER WILL LOOK AFTER YOUR MEN, CAPTAIN -- NOW I'VE GOT TO GET THE STANDARD TO FABRE -- HE'S STILL THE OFFICIAL BEARER! WE'LL MEET AGAIN!
WE HOPE THAT IT WILL BE SOON, MON BRAVE!
R.N.

IT WAS A MONTH LATER THAT THOSE FRENCHMEN SAW PAUL BRAVE -- AS ONE OF THE GUESTS OF HONOUR OF A SPECIAL MILITARY PARADE AT THE FREE FRENCH FORCES DEPOT IN LONDON. THE OTHER GUEST WAS ROGER FABRE...
ALL THE ARMY PRISONERS YOU HELPED TO ESCAPE, VOLUNTEERED TO FIGHT UNDER THE FLAG OF GLORY UNTIL FRANCE IS FREE! THE SAILORS WILL SERVE ON THE "TEMERAIRE"!

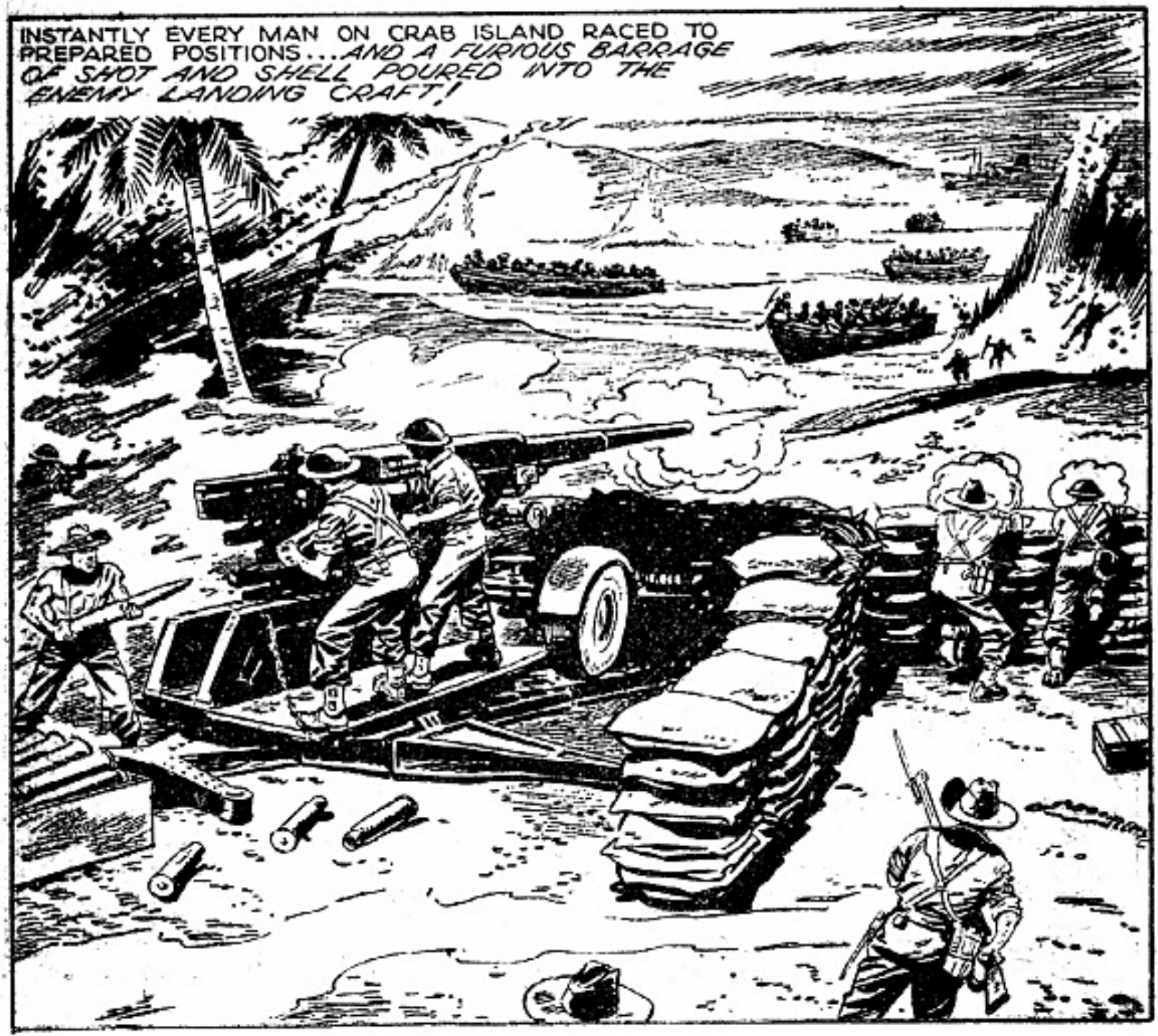
THEN SUDDENLY ROGER FABRE TURNED ON THE DAIS AND DREW PAUL FORWARD TO HIS SIDE...
YOUR PLACE IS HERE -- A HERO OF FRANCE -- WHERE MY REGIMENT CAN SHOW YOU ITS PRIDE AND ITS THANKS.
IT'S AN HONOUR TO STAND BESIDE A VERY BRAVE AND GALLANT SOLDIER -- AND TO SALUTE THE FLAG OF GLORY!

PAUL BRAVE
AND THE
Siege of Crab Island

THE ALLIES FOUGHT DESPERATELY TO STEM THE RUTHLESS JAPANESE ADVANCE. AUSTRALIA WAS MENACED... AND ON A SMALL CORAL ATOLL OFF NEW GUINEA, CALLED CRAB ISLAND, AN AIRSTRIP WAS HACKED OUT OF THE LIVING JUNGLE FOR A BOMBER STRIKING FORCE...
HERE COME THE FIRST PLANES! NOW WE'LL BE ABLE TO BASH THOSE DARNED JAPS AND STOP 'EM IN THEIR TRACKS!
YEAH. IF THEY DON'T GET HERE FIRST, COBBER...I SAW A RADIO SIGNAL THIS MORNING SAYING THEY'D CAPTURED THE MAHATE ISLES A HUNDRED MILES NORTH OF HERE.

SQUADRON LEADER PAUL BRAVE FRENCH AIR ACE OF THE R.A.F., HAD ARRIVED BY CATALINA FLYING BOAT THAT MORNING FROM DARWIN IN NORTH AUSTRALIA, TO GET A FIRST-HAND REPORT ON THE SITUATION FROM THE R.A.F. COMMANDING OFFICER, WING-COMMANDER DAVE DENNING.
IT'S A RACE AGAINST TIME, PAUL. THE JAPS HAVE WIPED UP OUR BOYS IN THE MAHATES AND WE'VE GOT TO HIT BACK... QUICKLY AND HARD! I MUST HAVE MORE BOMBS AND AMMUNITION BEFORE THEY LAUNCH AN ATTACK ON US!
I UNDERSTAND, ALAN. RIGHT, YOU SEND A SIGNAL TO DARWIN AND I'LL FLY BACK AND CHASE THEM UP FOR YOU.

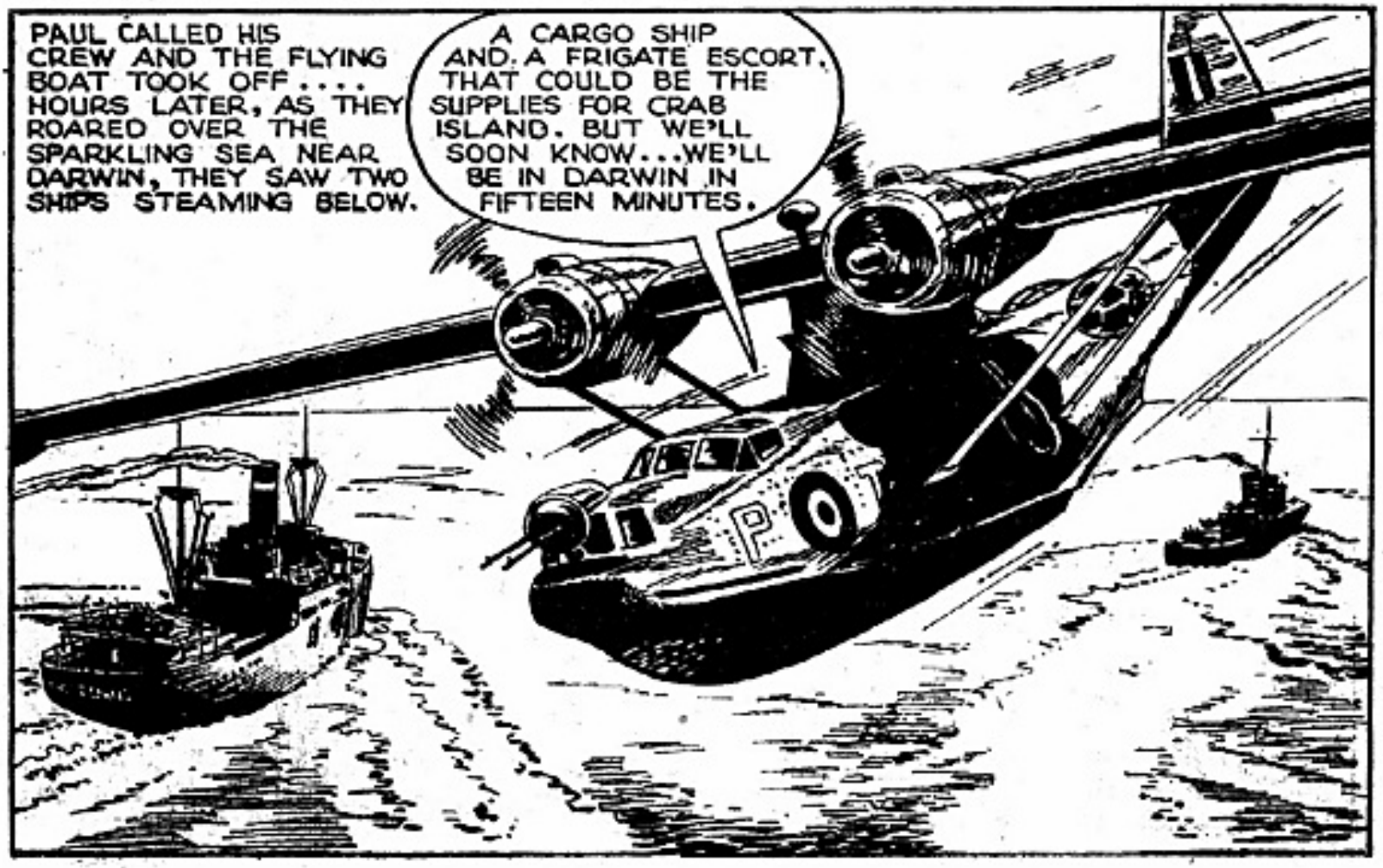
SUDDENLY, THERE CAME A STARTLED YELL FROM OUTSIDE...
SIR! THE JAPS ARE COMING! SIX LANDING CRAFT HAVE SNEAKED THROUGH THE CORAL REEF!


INSTANTLY EVERY MAN ON CRAB ISLAND RACED TO PREPARED POSITIONS...AND A FURIOUS BARRAGE OF SHOT AND SHELL POURED INTO THE ENEMY LANDING CRAFT!

SEA MIST HAD HELPED THE JAPANESE IN THEIR SURPRISE ATTACK. BUT THE DEFENDERS FOUGHT BACK WITH SUPERB COURAGE. THREE LANDING CRAFT WERE SUNK... BUT THE OTHERS REACHED THE BEACH....
LET 'EM, HAVE IT, MES AMIS! THIS IS ONE ISLAND THOSE LITTLE FIENDS ARE NOT GOING TO TAKE!

PAUL'S FEARLESS EXAMPLE INSPIRED THE SOLDIERS AND R.A.F. MEN AND THEY HURLED BACK THE SHRIEKING ENEMY YARD BY YARD....

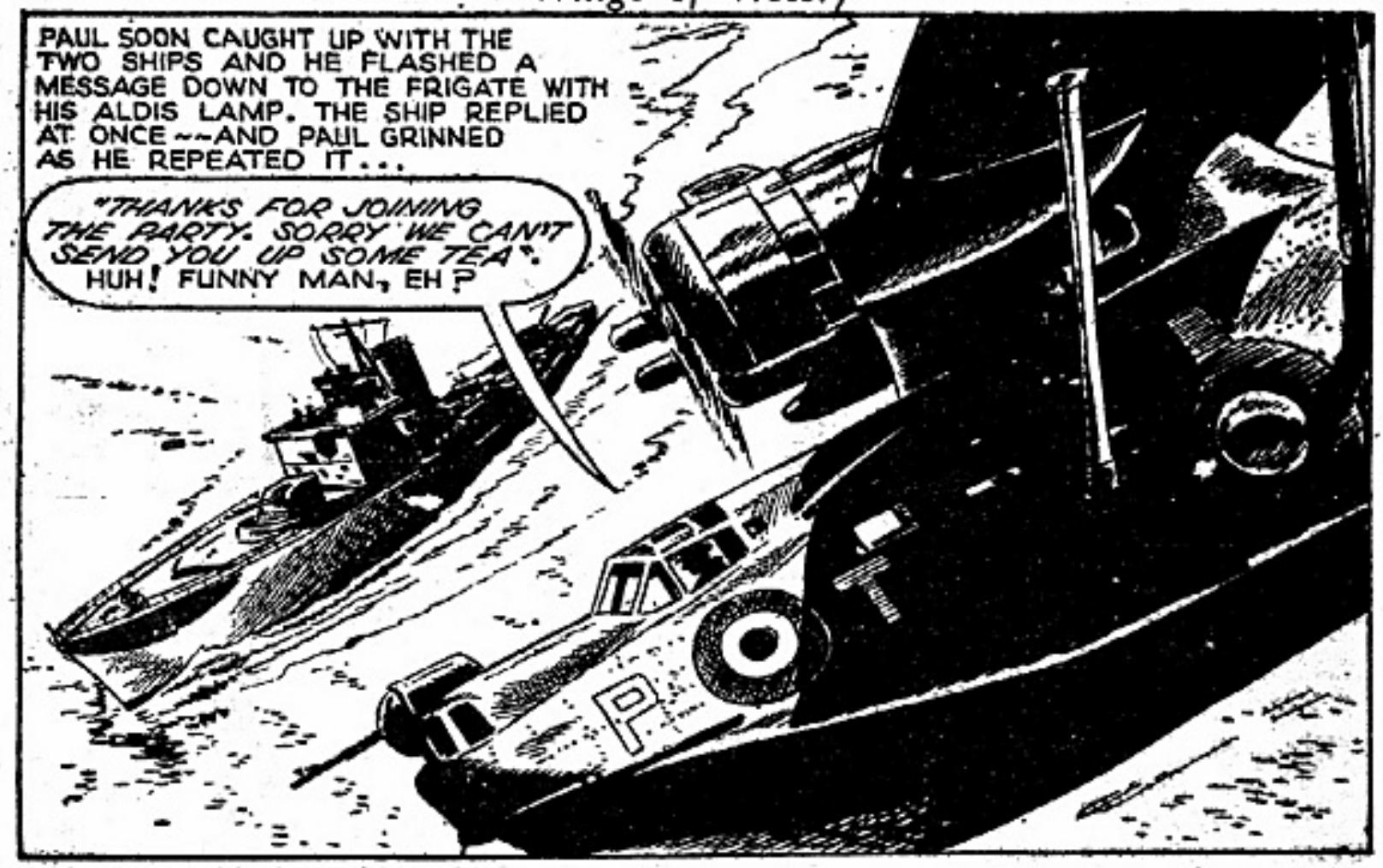
IN FIFTEEN GRUELLING MINUTES, THE BATTLE WAS OVER.... AND THE JAPS WHO STILL LIVED HAD BEEN ROUNDED UP AND TAKEN PRISONER.
THEY...THEY'LL SEND TWICE THE NUMBER NEXT TIME, PAUL ... WE ... WE MUST HAVE MORE SUPPLIES!
DON'T YOU WORRY, DAVE. THEY DIDN'T SPOT MY CATALINA ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE LAGOON. I'M LEAVING RIGHT NOW FOR DARWIN. I'LL GET THAT AMMUNITION TO YOU OR DIE IN THE ATTEMPT.

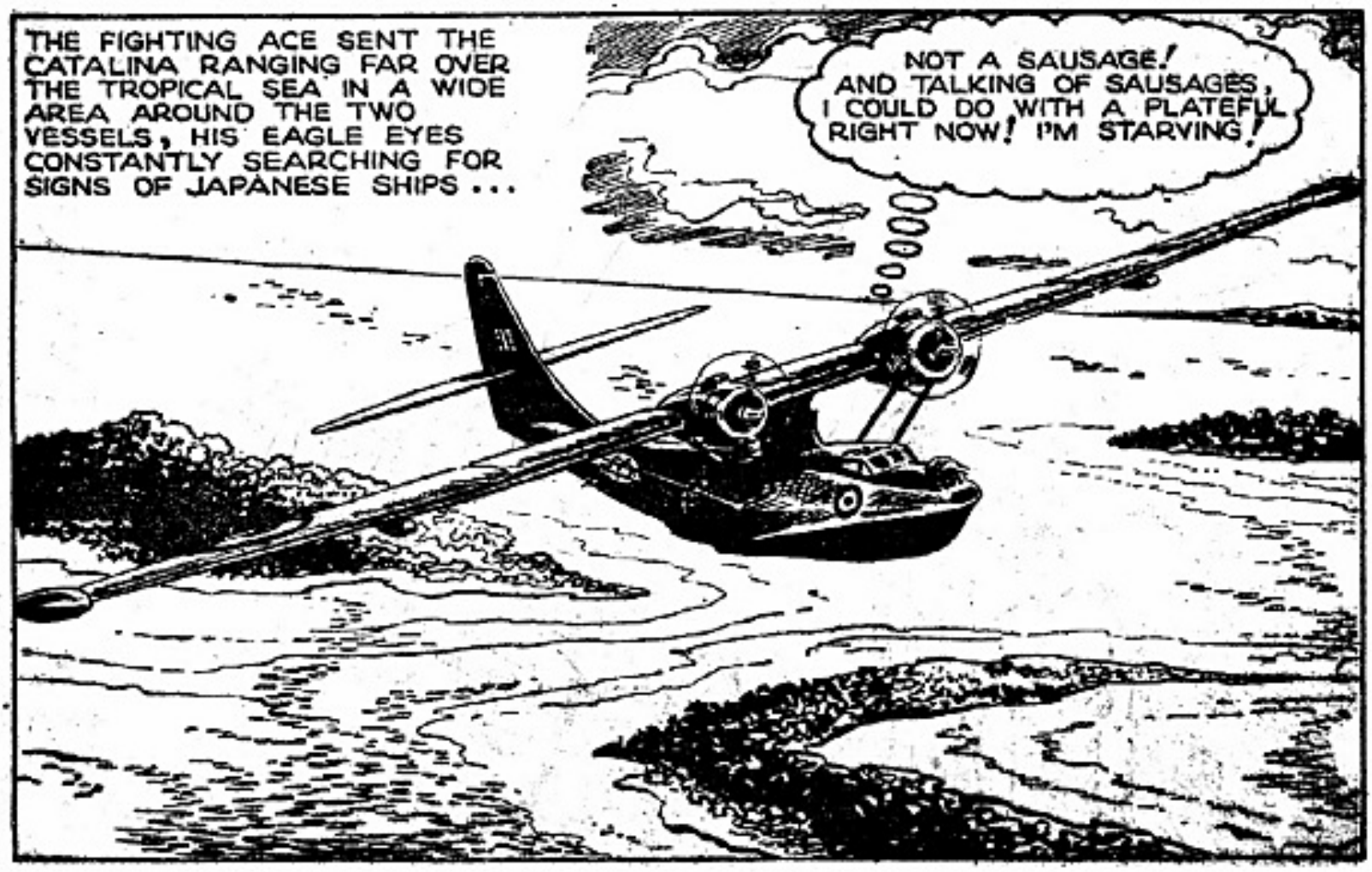

PAUL CALLED HIS CREW AND THE FLYING BOAT TOOK OFF.... HOURS LATER, AS THEY ROARED OVER THE SPARKLING SEA NEAR DARWIN, THEY SAW TWO SHIPS STEAMING BELOW.
A CARGO SHIP AND A FRIGATE ESCORT. THAT COULD BE THE SUPPLIES FOR CRAB ISLAND. BUT WE'LL SOON KNOW...WE'LL BE IN DARWIN IN FIFTEEN MINUTES.

AS SOON AS HE HAD LANDED, THE FAMOUS AGE REPORTED TO THE HEADQUARTERS IN THE TOWN...

THE SITUATION ON CRAB ISLAND IS PRETTY GRIM. IS THERE ANY CHANCE OF GETTING MORE MEN UP THERE? AND ONE BOATLOAD OF SUPPLIES WON'T BE MUCH HELP IF THE JAPS PUT IN A FULL-SCALE ASSAULT.

ALL WE CAN SPARE HAS GONE IN THE "RED ROSE", BRAVE. AND ONE FRIGATE, THE "CORAL", IS THE ONLY ESCORT AVAILABLE FOR A WEEK. I KNOW IT'S TOUGH... BUT WE'VE GOT THOUSANDS OF MILES OF OCEAN TO PATROL. OUR DEFENCES ARE STRETCHED TO BREAKING POINT.

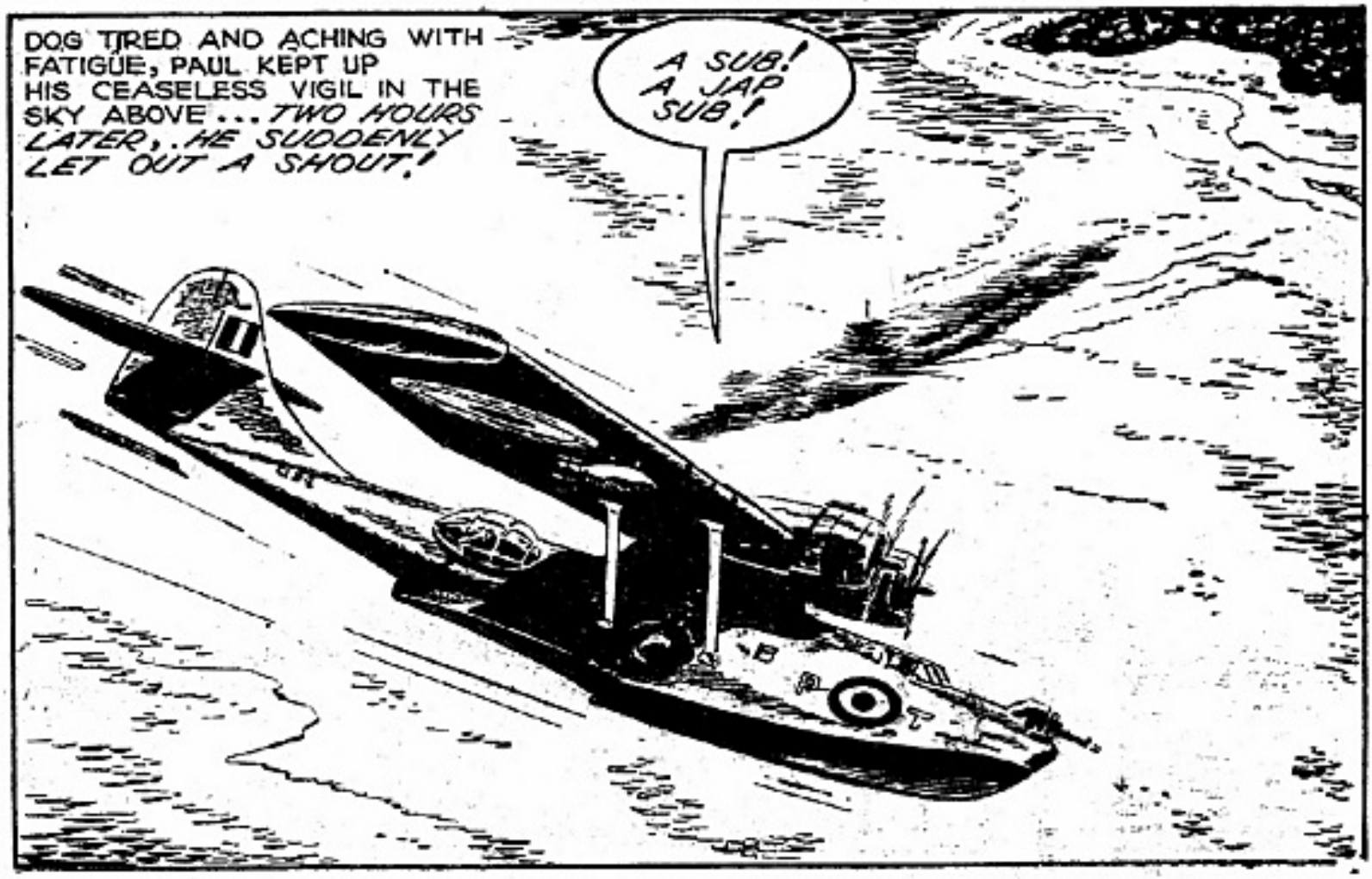

PAUL SOON CAUGHT UP WITH THE TWO SHIPS AND HE FLASHED A MESSAGE DOWN TO THE FRIGATE WITH HIS ALDIS LAMP. THE SHIP REPLIED AT ONCE ~~AND PAUL GRINNED AS HE REPEATED IT...
"THANKS FOR JOINING THE PARTY. SORRY WE CAN'T SEND YOU UP SOME TEA".
HUH! FUNNY MAN, EH?
P

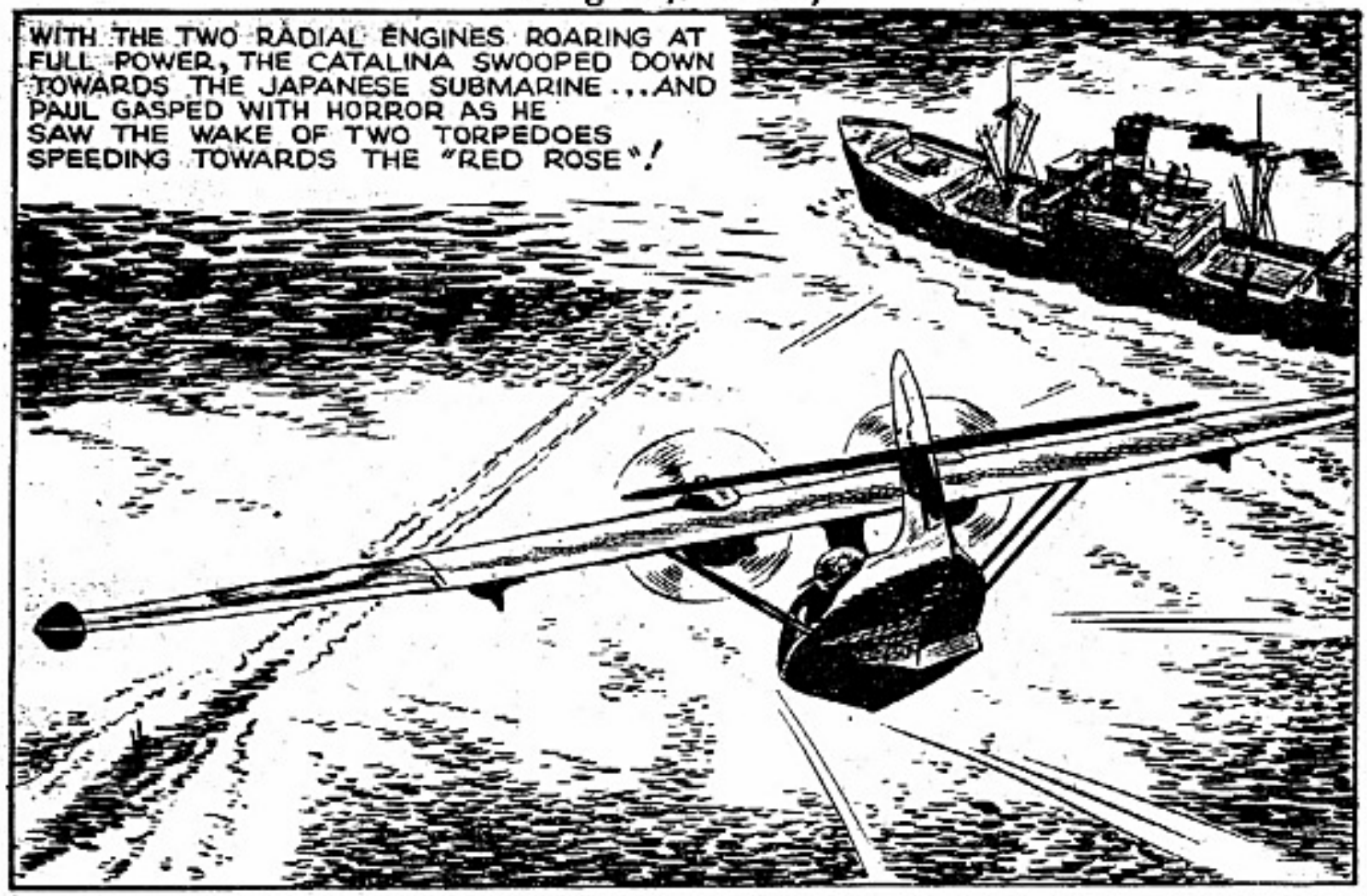

THE FIGHTING ACE SENT THE CATALINA RANGING FAR OVER THE TROPICAL SEA IN A WIDE AREA AROUND THE TWO VESSELS, HIS EAGLE EYES CONSTANTLY SEARCHING FOR SIGNS OF JAPANESE SHIPS...
NOT A SAUSAGE! AND TALKING OF SAUSAGES, I COULD DO WITH A PLATEFUL RIGHT NOW! I'M STARVING!

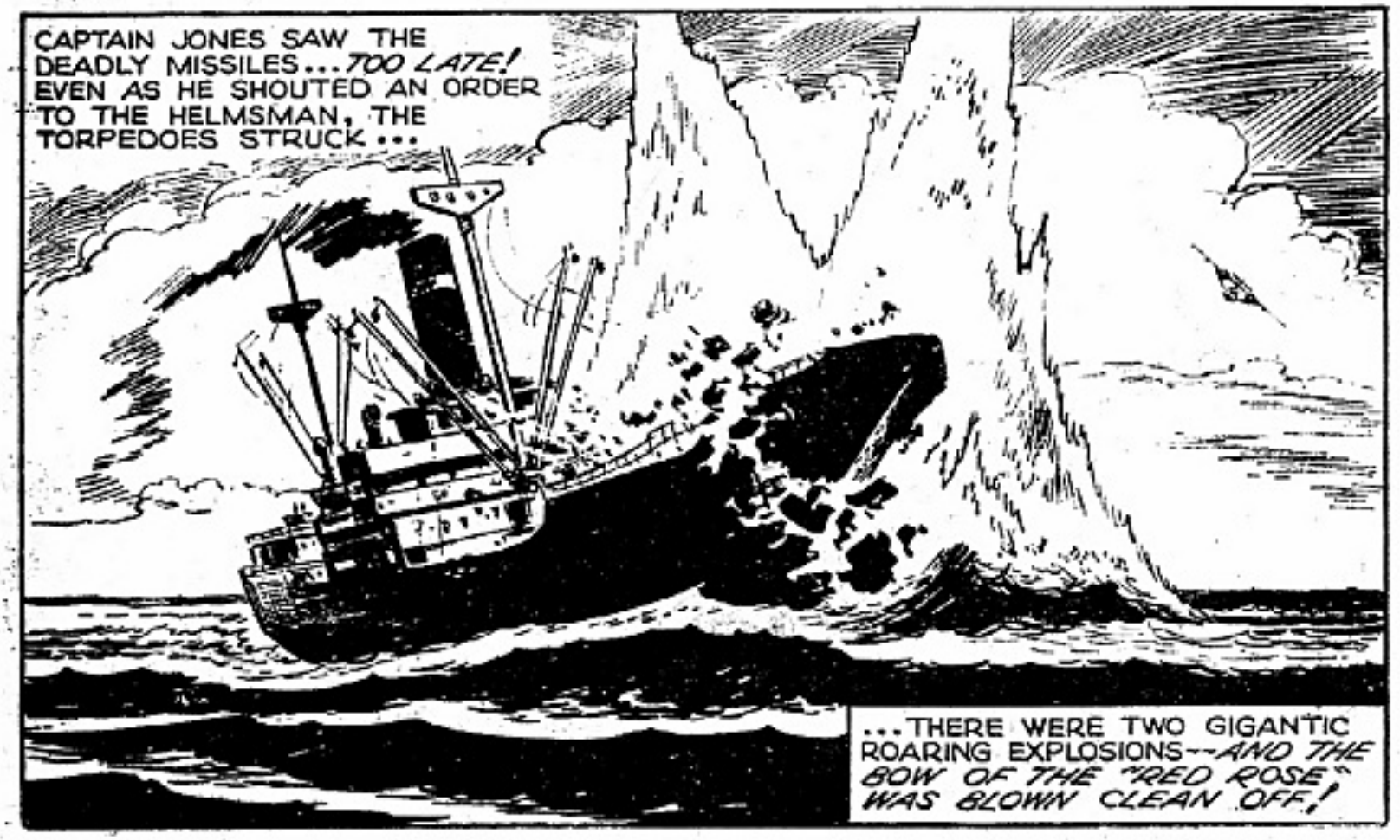
BUT WHEN PAUL CAME BACK AGAIN TO THE "CORAL" AND THE "RED ROSE", ALL THOUGHTS OF HUNGER VANISHED AS HE RECEIVED ANOTHER SIGNAL
"FROM CAPTAIN CORAL TO CAPTAIN CATALINA. ENGINE TROUBLE. MAIN BEARING. ESTIMATE EIGHT HOURS WORK." MA FOI! THAT'S TORN IT!

THE FEARLESS ACE KNEW THAT EIGHT HOURS COULD MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH FOR THE DEFENDERS OF CRAB ISLAND...AND HE MADE A SWIFT DECISION!
WHAT'S HE SAY, TAYLOR?
IF YOU...ARE WILLING...WILL CARRY ON ESCORT...ALONE... FRIGATE CAN...CATCH UP LATER... ALL SPEED ESSENTIAL.

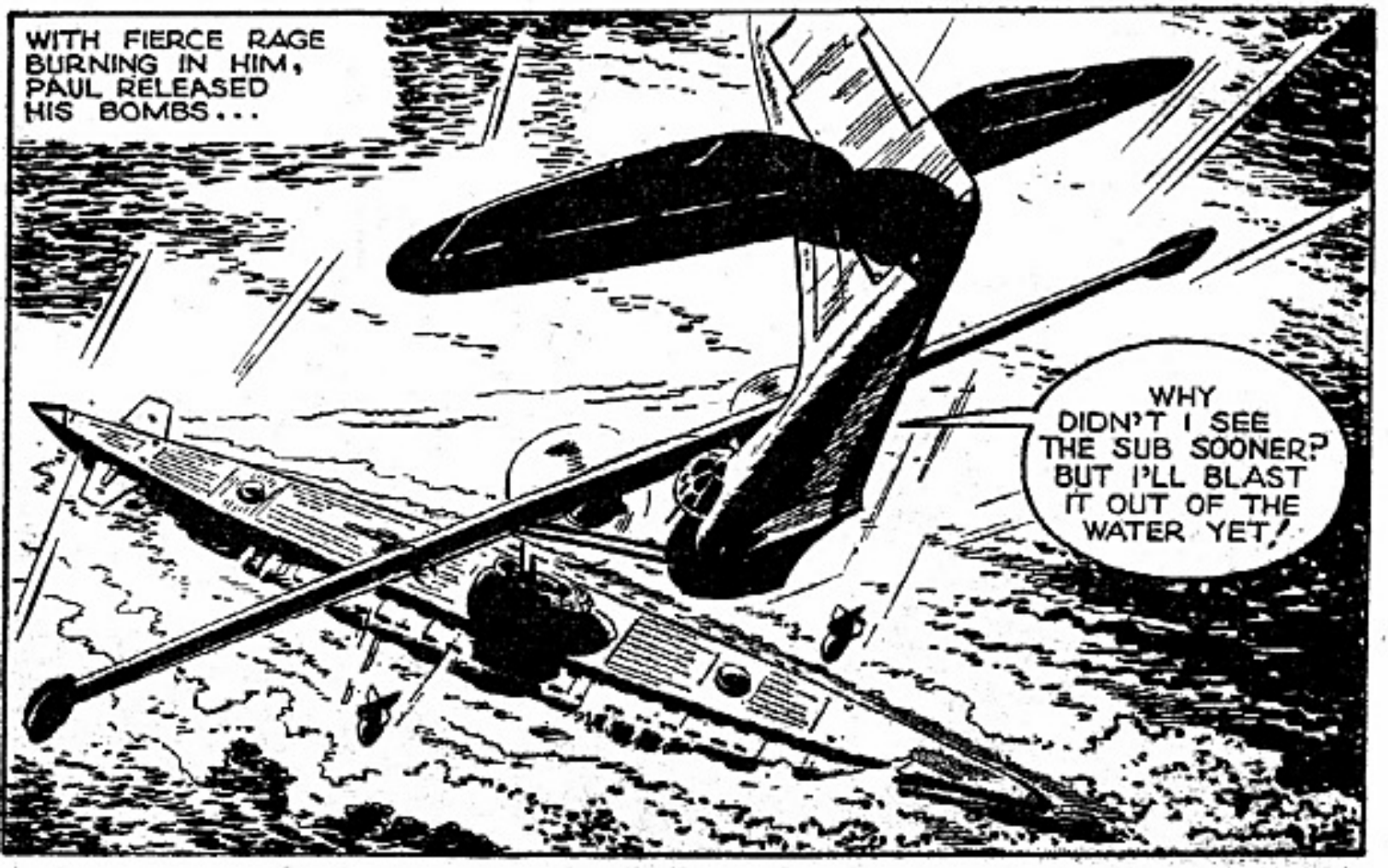
CAPTAIN JONES OF THE "RED ROSE" KNEW IT WOULD BE TAKING AN ADDED RISK...BUT HE KNEW, TOO, THAT THE LIVES OF MANY MEN DEPENDED ON HIS REACHING CRAB ISLAND AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. SO HE AGREED AT ONCE...
FULL SPEED AHEAD!


DOG TIRED AND ACHING WITH FATIGUE, PAUL KEPT UP HIS CEASELESS VIGIL IN THE SKY ABOVE...TWO HOURS LATER, HE SUDDENLY LET OUT A SHOUT!
A SUB! A JAP SUB!


WITH THE TWO RADIAL ENGINES ROARING AT FULL POWER, THE CATALINA SWOOPED DOWN TOWARDS THE JAPANESE SUBMARINE ... AND PAUL GASPED WITH HORROR AS HE SAW THE WAKE OF TWO TORPEDOES SPEEDING TOWARDS THE "RED ROSE"!

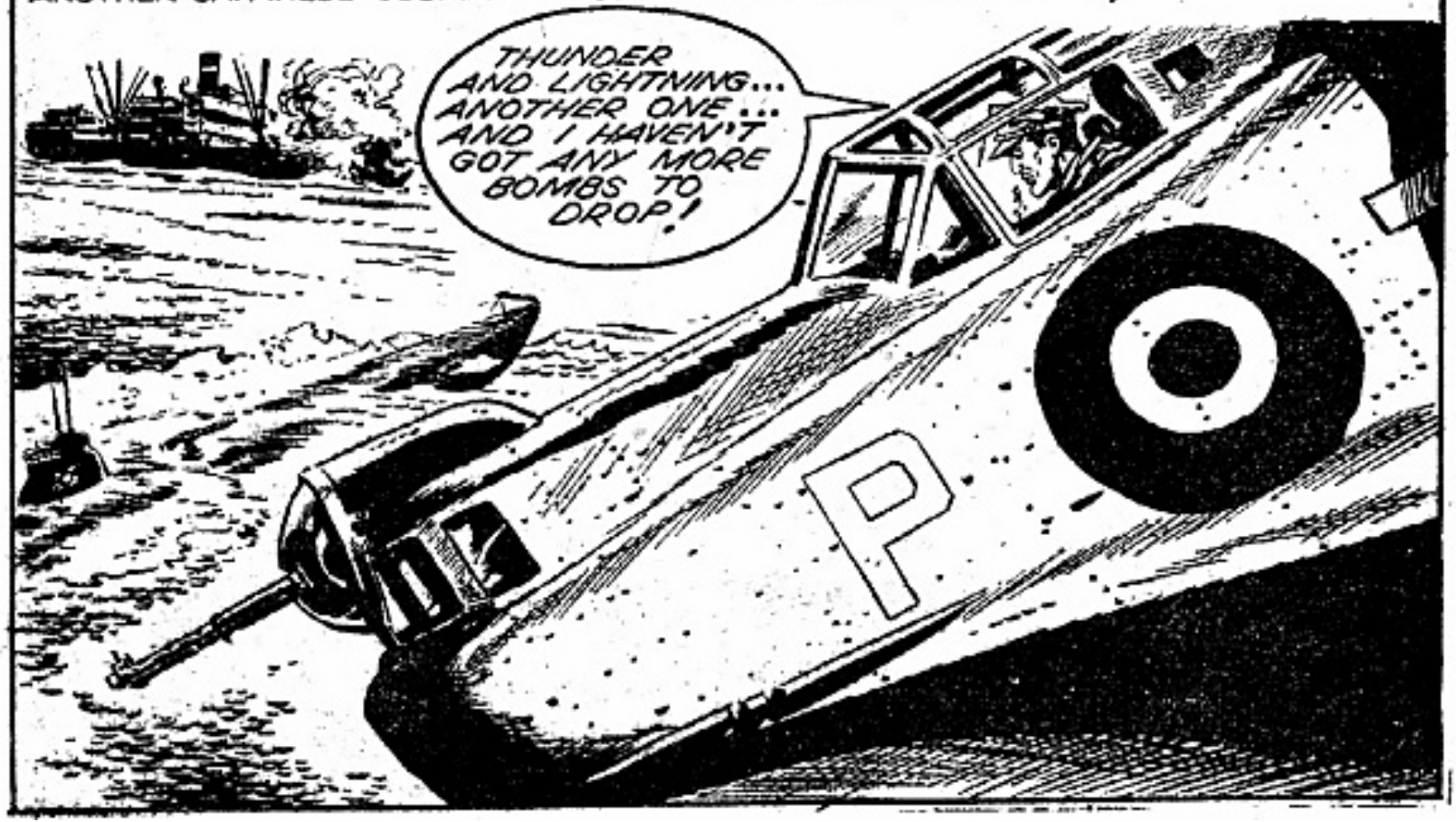

CAPTAIN JONES SAW THE DEADLY MISSILES... TOO LATE! EVEN AS HE SHOUTED AN ORDER TO THE HELMSMAN, THE TORPEDOES STRUCK...
...THERE WERE TWO GIGANTIC ROARING EXPLOSIONS--AND THE BOW OF THE "RED ROSE" WAS BLOWN CLEAN OFF!

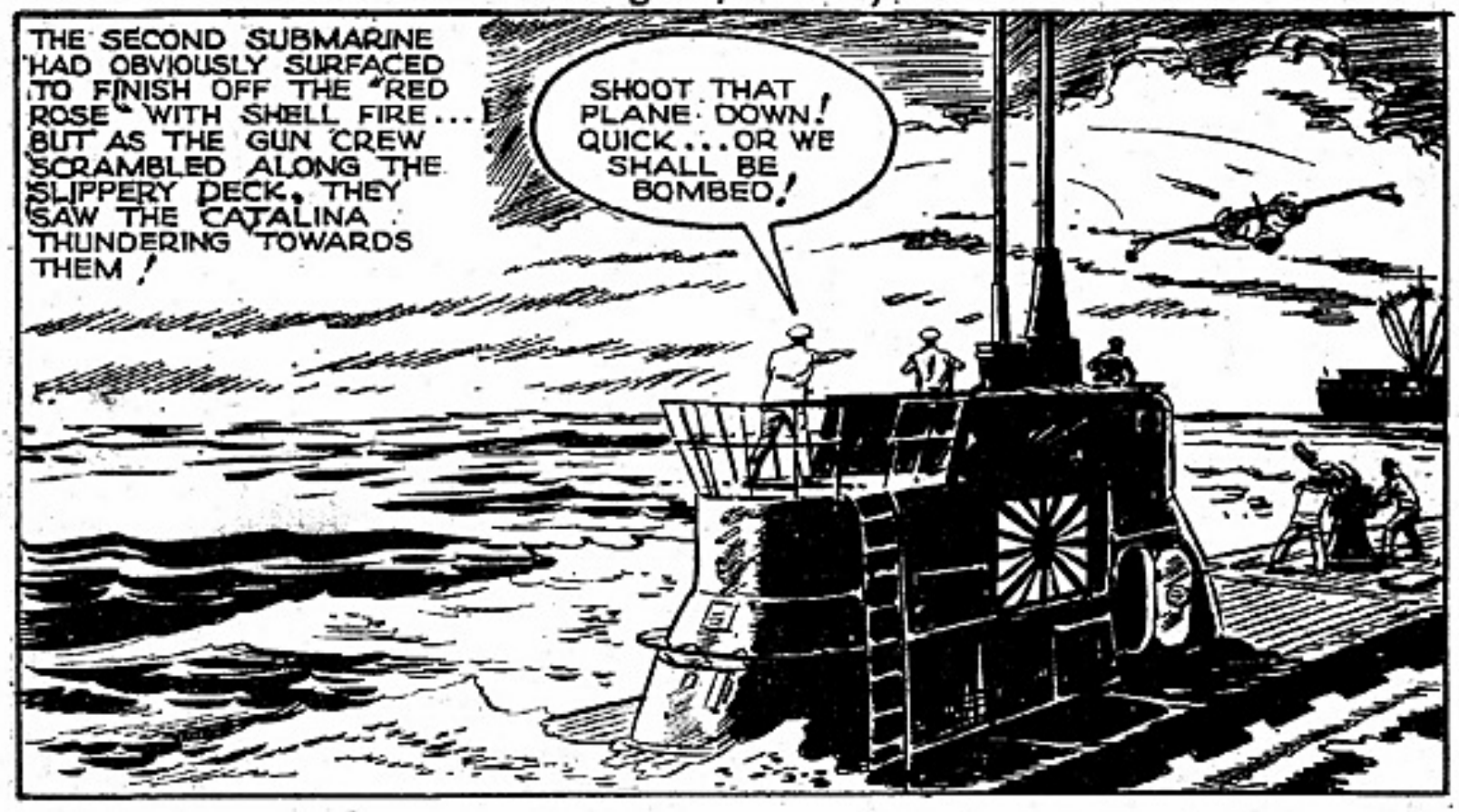
JAGGED STEEL SPLINTERS FLEW IN ALL DIRECTIONS AND CAPTAIN JONES FELL...
WE'RE SINKING! WE'RE SINKING!

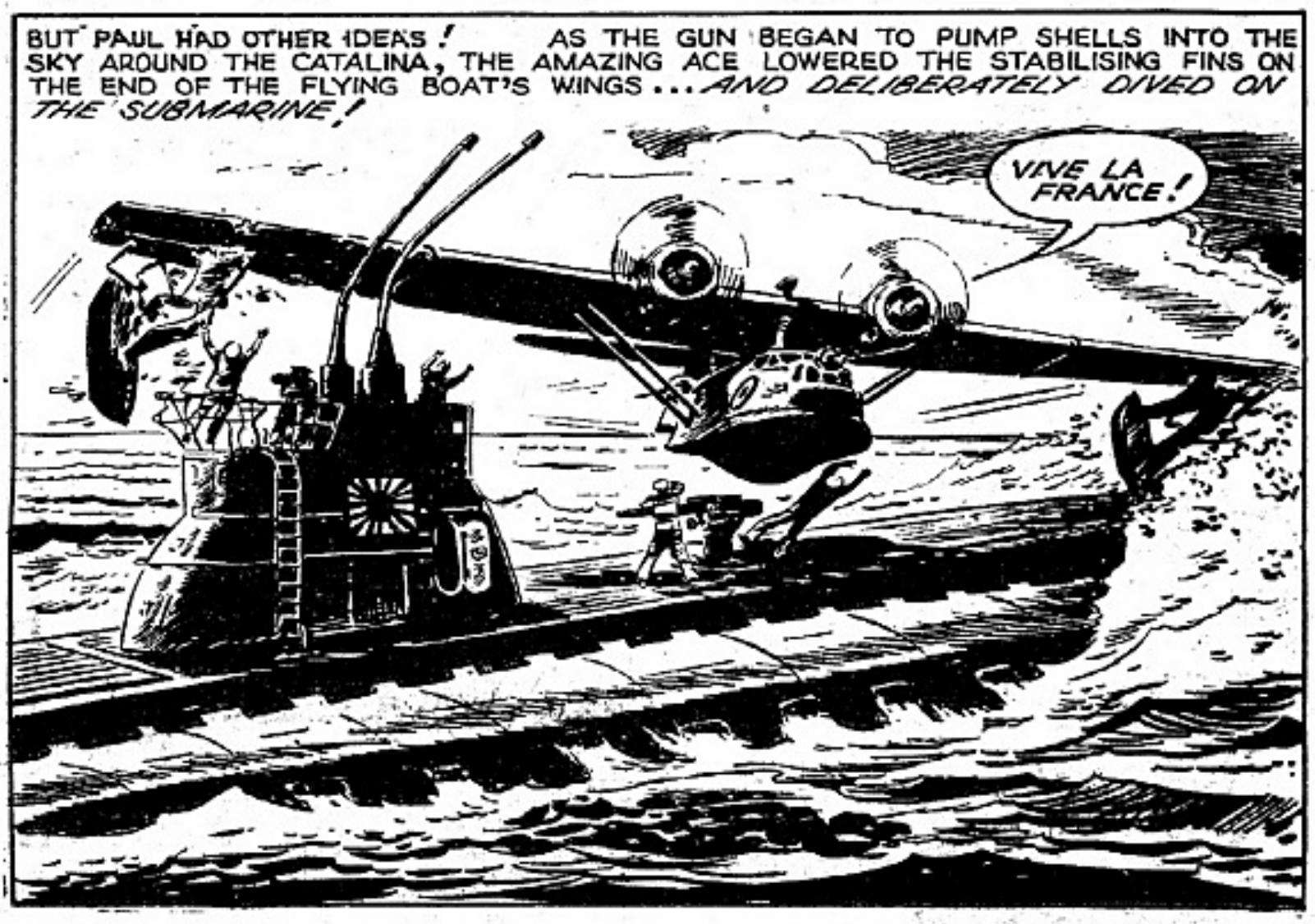

WITH FIERCE RAGE BURNING IN HIM, PAUL RELEASED HIS BOMBS...
WHY DIDN'T I SEE THE SUB SOONER? BUT I'LL BLAST IT OUT OF THE WATER YET!

THE FIRST BOMB PLUNGED INTO THE SEA NEAR THE JAPANESE SUBMARINE . . . BUT THE SECOND ONE LANDED FAIR AND SQUARE ON ITS STEEL DECK . . . TEARING OPEN THE PLATES AS IF THEY HAD BEEN TISSUE PAPER!

THE SUBMARINE HEELED OVER AND SANK LIKE A STONE . . . THEN, AS PAUL BROUGHT THE CATALINA ROUND OVER THE WALLOWING "RED ROSE", HE SAW ANOTHER JAPANESE SUBMARINE SURFACING ON THE FAR SIDE!




THE SECOND SUBMARINE HAD OBVIOUSLY SURFACED TO FINISH OFF THE "RED ROSE" WITH SHELL FIRE... BUT AS THE GUN CREW SCRAMBLED ALONG THE SLIPPERY DECK, THEY SAW THE CATALINA THUNDERING TOWARDS THEM!
SHOOT THAT PLANE DOWN! QUICK...OR WE SHALL BE BOMBED!


BUT PAUL HAD OTHER IDEAS! AS THE GUN BEGAN TO PUMP SHELLS INTO THE SKY AROUND THE CATALINA, THE AMAZING ACE LOWERED THE STABILISING FINS ON THE END OF THE FLYING BOAT'S WINGS... AND DELIBERATELY DIVED ON THE SUBMARINE!
VIVE LA FRANCE!

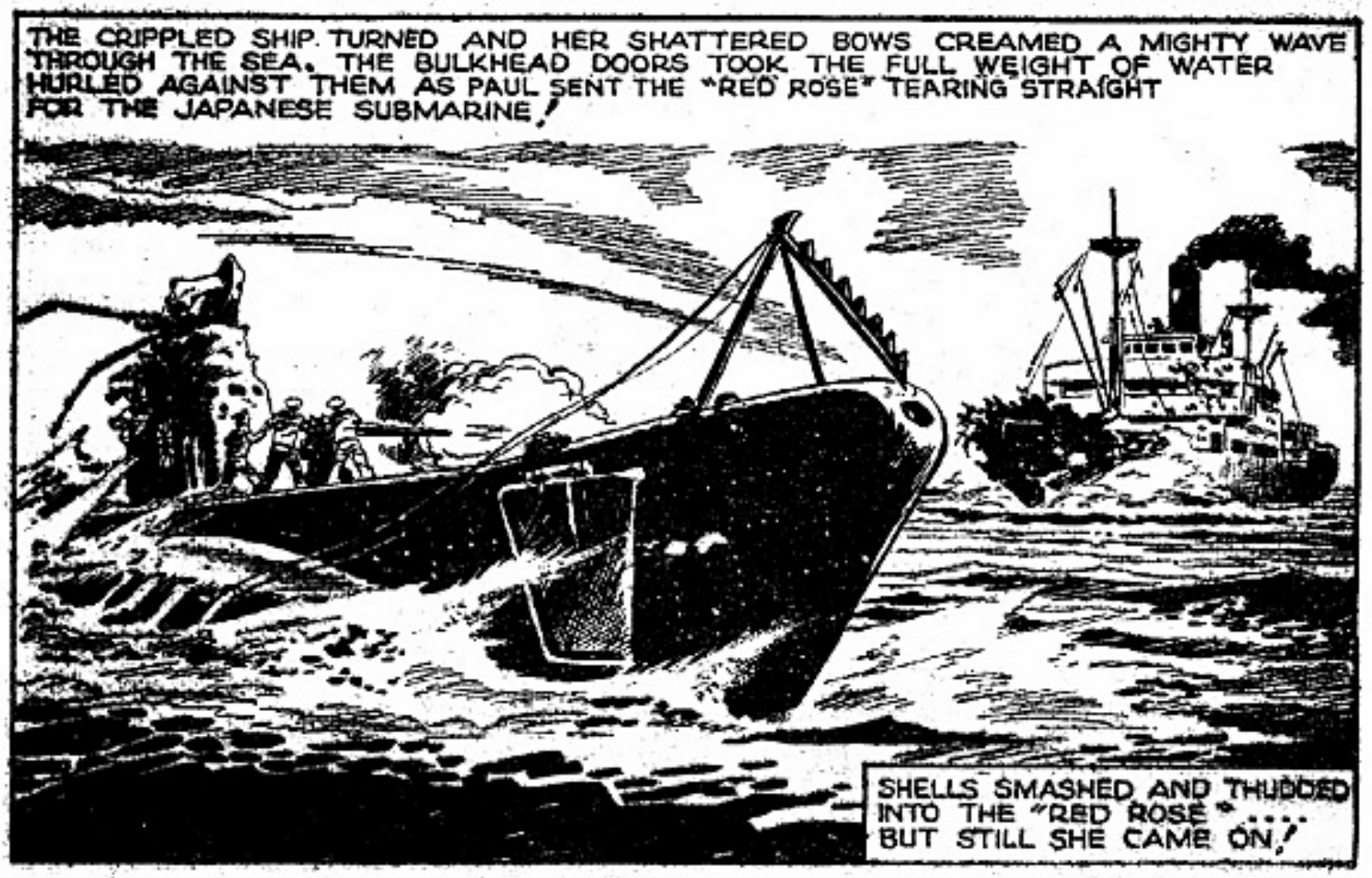
THE SUBMARINE LURCHED UNDER THE TERRIFIC IMPACT AND THE FINS WERE TORN FROM THE CATALINA. OUT OF CONTROL, THE FLYING BOAT PLUNGED INTO THE SEA IN A WELTER OF HISSING FOAM AND SPRAY!

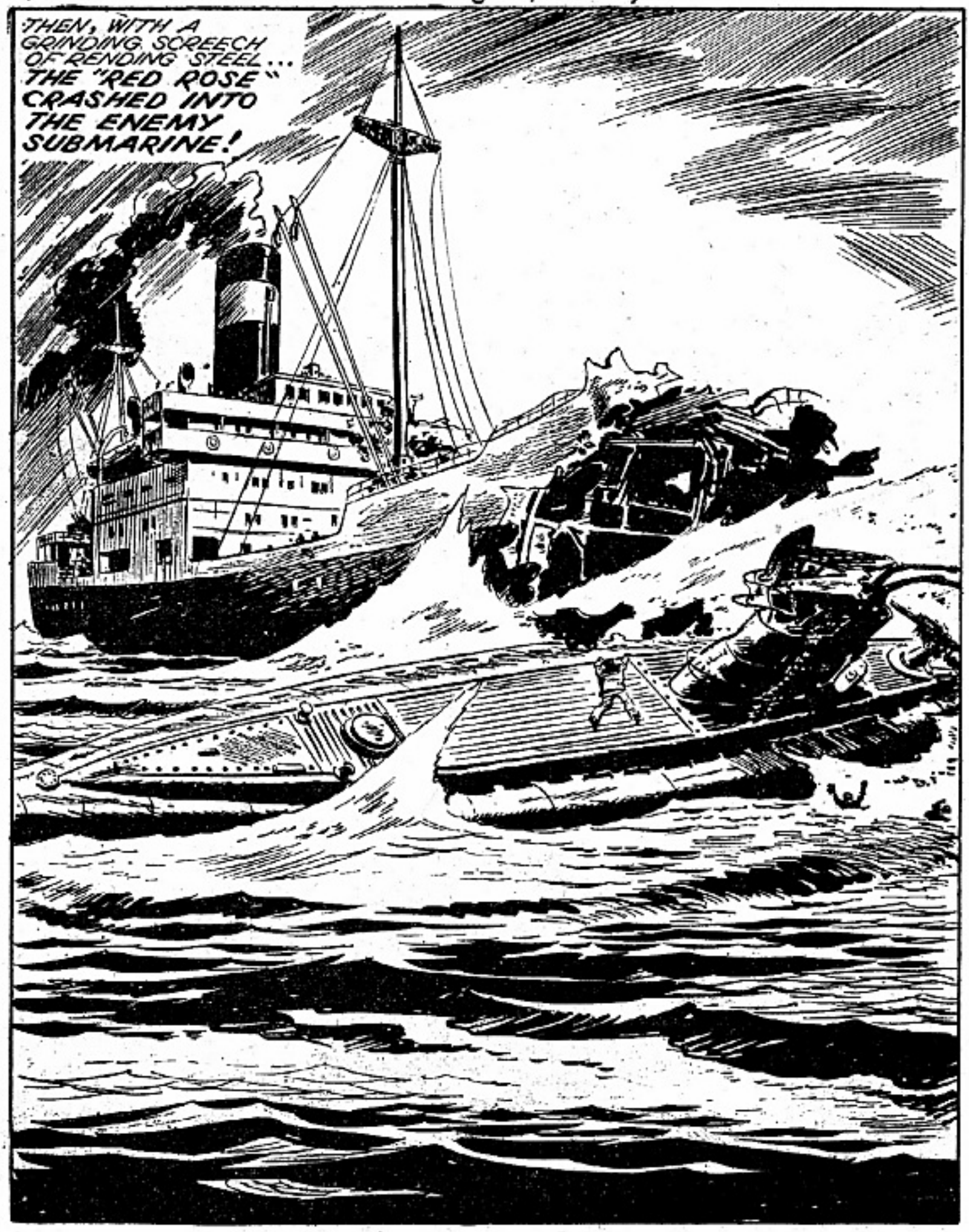
AS THE CATALINA BROKE UP AND BEGAN TO SINK, PAUL FLUNG HIMSELF OUT INTO THE SEA...
AH WELL, GOOD JOB THE WATER'S WARM! HOPE THERE AREN'T ANY SHARKS ABOUT!

BUT THERE WERE SHARKS ABOUT! SINISTER BLACK TRIANGULAR FINS CUT THROUGH THE WATER TOWARDS THE SWIMMING ACE, CLOSING ON HIM RAPIDLY!
PHEW! I SPOKE TOO SOON!

BUT SHARKS ARE COWARDLY BRUTES... BY KICKING FURIOUSLY WITH HIS FEET, PAUL KEPT THE DEADLY SEA-TIGERS AT BAY UNTIL HE REACHED THE SIDE OF THE "RED ROSE", WHERE WILLING HANDS PULLED HIM ABOARD.
THANKS, MES AMIS... JUST IN TIME, I RECKON!

DRIPPING WET AND GASPING, PAUL CLIMBED OVER THE SIDE AND CLATTERED UP TO THE BRIDGE. THEN HE SAW THE LEAN SHAPE OF THE JAPANESE SUBMARINE THREE HUNDRED YARDS AWAY. ENEMY SAILORS WERE ONCE MORE BRINGING THE GUN ROUND TO BEAR ON THE "RED ROSE". WITH HIS CAPTAIN OUT OF ACTION, THE YOUNG FIRST OFFICER WAS AT A LOSS .... SO PAUL BRAVE TOOK OVER ON THE SPOT!
RIGHT, SAILOR .... HARD-A-PORT! FULL SPEED AHEAD!
BUT... BUT WE CAN'T! WE'LL SINK!
PAUL'S ONLY REPLY WAS A CHEERFUL GRIN!


THE CRIPPLED SHIP TURNED AND HER SHATTERED BOWS CREAMED A MIGHTY WAVE THROUGH THE SEA. THE BULKHEAD DOORS TOOK THE FULL WEIGHT OF WATER HURLED AGAINST THEM AS PAUL SENT THE "RED ROSE" TEARING STRAIGHT FOR THE JAPANESE SUBMARINE!
SHELLS SMASHED AND THUDDED INTO THE "RED ROSE" .... BUT STILL SHE CAME ON!

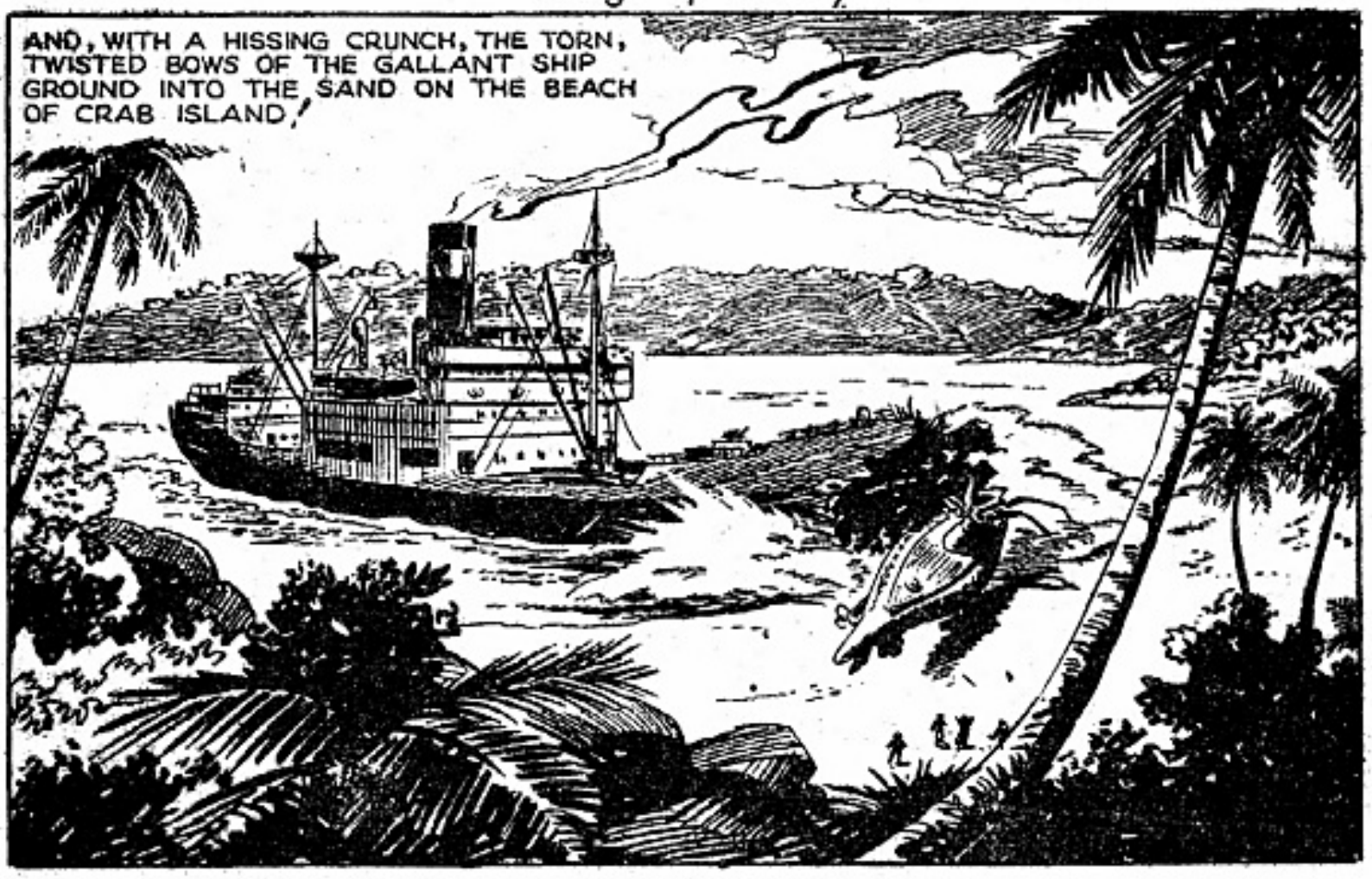

THEN, WITH A GRINDING SCREECH OF RENDING STEEL... THE "RED ROSE" CRASHED INTO THE ENEMY SUBMARINE!

THE TERRIFIC IMPACT SENT A SHUDDER RIGHT THROUGH THE GALLANT MERCHANT SHIP AND PAUL CLUTCHED THE BRIDGEHOUSE RAIL TO PREVENT HIMSELF BEING HURLED TO THE DECK.
MORBLEU! WE'VE DONE IT! HALF-SPEED AHEAD!

STOPPING ONLY TO PICK UP THE JAPANESE SURVIVORS, THE "RED ROSE" LIMPED ON TOWARDS CRAB ISLAND, WITH THE SUBMARINE WEDGED FIRMLY IN THE BOWS OF THE CARGO SHIP. IT WAS A TRULY AMAZING SIGHT!
NEXT STOP, CRAB ISLAND! THAT JAPANESE SUBMARINE HAS STOPPED THE HOLES NICELY!

GASPS OF AMAZEMENT, THEN A ROAR OF CHEERING, CAME FROM THE DEFENDERS OF CRAB ISLAND THE NEXT DAY WHEN THE BATTERED SHIP STEAMED INTO THE LAGOON!
WHAT'S THAT? A SECRET WEAPON?
NOT EXACTLY, MATE. I HEARD THE OLD MAN SAY THEY'D HAD A RADIO MESSAGE FROM HER... SHE'S THE "RED ROSE", COMPLETE WITH JAP SUB AND SQUADRON LEADER BRAVE IN COMMAND.

THE STUPENDOUS VOYAGE OF THE "RED ROSE" WAS ALMOST AT AN END. THE CONTINUAL POUNDING OF THE SEAS HAD OPENED MORE PLATES IN HER BOWS... SO PAUL DECIDED ON ONE LAST THRILLING ACT TO SAVE THE PRECIOUS CARGO OF SUPPLIES...
ER... TURN TO STARBOARD, SIR?
NO:.. STRAIGHT FOR THE BEACH! KEEP HER GOING!


AND, WITH A HISSING CRUNCH, THE TORN, TWISTED BOWS OF THE GALLANT SHIP GROUND INTO THE SAND ON THE BEACH OF CRAB ISLAND!

ALL THAT DAY, AND THE NIGHT WHICH FOLLOWED, THE "RED ROSE" SWARMED WITH TROOPS, UNLOADING THE BOMBS AND AMMUNITION FROM HER HOLD...
PAUL, NOBODY ELSE BUT YOU COULD HAVE DONE THIS!
NONSENSE! I JUST HAD A BRIGHT IDEA OR TWO, THAT'S ALL, ALAN!

Printed in England by Messrs. Percy Brothers Ltd., Manchester 1, and published on the third Thursday in each month by The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E. .4. Advertisement Offices: Tallis House, Tallis Street, London, E.C.4. Sole Agents: Australasia, Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd.; South Africa, Central News Agency, Ltd.; Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Messrs. Kingstons, Ltd. WAR PICTURE LIBRARY is sold subject to the following conditions, that it shall not, without the written consent of the Publishers first given, be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of by way of Trade except at the full retail price as shown on the cover; and that it shall not be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of in a mutilated condition, or in any unauthorised cover by way of Trade: or affixed to or as part of any publications or advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever.
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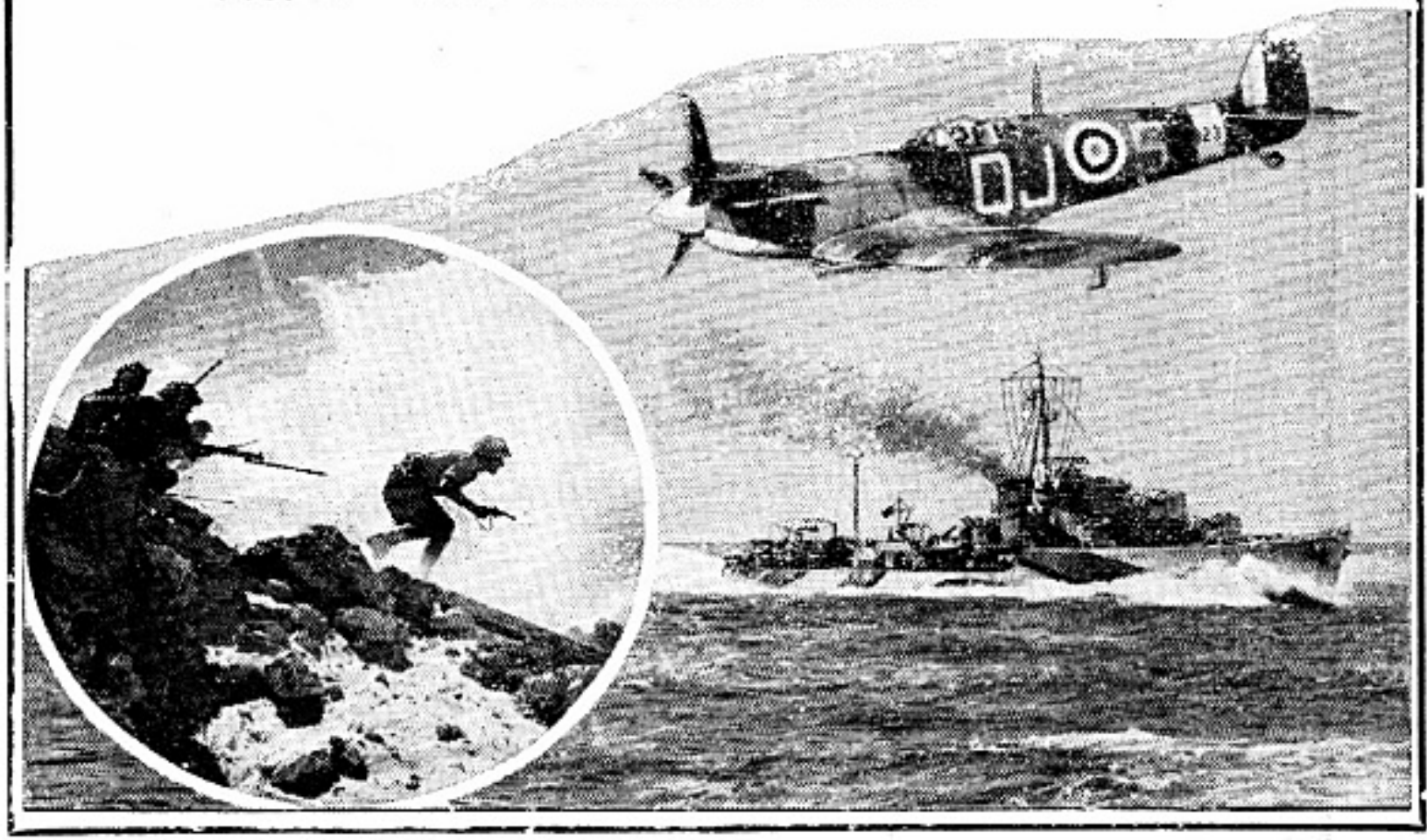

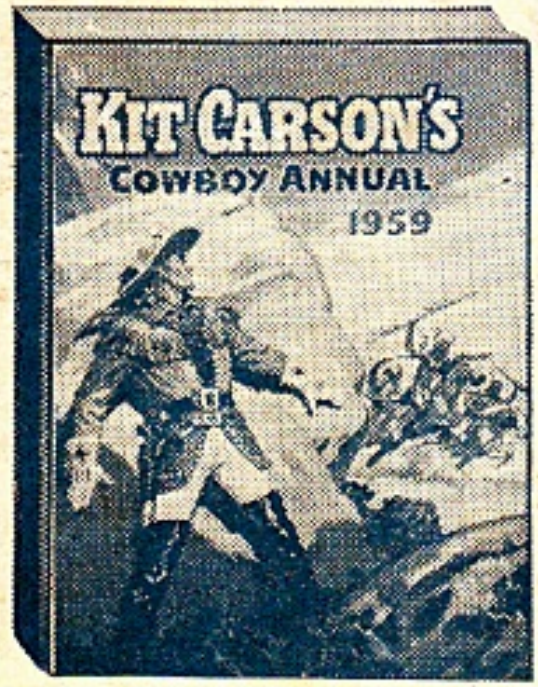

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